‘My mother taught me to take the high road’

Mr T

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Barney Ronay It’s the fans who end up paying for the £3bn transfer window

Sport

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PM tries to calm bond markets as sell-off threatens first budget

Heather Stewart
Jessica Elgot

Andy Burnham moved to calm volatile bond markets yesterday as surging borrowing costs threatened to throw plans for his government’s first budget next month into chaos.

After a days-long sell-off of government bonds, and with the chancellor, John Healey, facing the prospect of sharply reduced spending power, Burnham used his first appearance at prime minister’s questions to promise decisions “grounded in fiscal responsibility”.

That was widely seen as an attempt to soothe investors after his statement to parliament on Tuesday in which he made bold promises of more public control of utilities, further interventions on the cost of living and a recommitment to a 3% increase in defence spending. While those offers were broadly welcomed by Labour MPs, Burnham was criticised by others for inflaming the sell-off. His former economic adviser Jim O’Neill said it was the “last thing” the markets needed.

Investors across world markets have been dumping government bonds amid fears about rising inflation, runaway deficits and competing demand for capital from tech companies on a debt-fuelled AI spending spree. The sell-off has driven up yields, or interest rates, including in the UK. At one point yesterday, the cost of 10-year borrowing for the government hit its highest level since 2008, at 5.29%, before easing slightly.

That is expected to be costly for Healey, when the independent Office for Budget Responsibility draws up its budget forecasts: the watchdog bases its projection for bond yields on a snapshot of market interest rates from several weeks before each budget, expected to be around now for Healey’s 28 October statement.

The chancellor has repeatedly stressed that “fiscal discipline” is the “bedrock” of government policy. He will give a speech next Monday setting out the new government’s plans for economic growth – less

8

than six months after senior

After the flood
Thousands still missing in devastated communities

Hannah Ellis-Petersen
Betrawati district

Searching for the body of his wife in the mud, Dil Bahadur Shrestha laments that he does not even have a shovel left. He has been using his hands to try to find her as he picks through the ruins of his house.

On Wednesday morning last week, Jamuna Shrestha, his wife of 50 years, had been at home in Betrawati on the banks of Nepal’s Trishuli River, feeding her beloved chickens and goats.

As deadly flash floods coursed down the river valley, Jamuna was last seen going back into her house, trying to usher her chickens to safety, while others fled uphill. Now that house stands like a muddy carcass, everything inside it destroyed or washed away by the violent force of the water and debris that killed more than 1,200 people in Nepal and Tibet.

▲ *Most houses in the Nepali town of Betrawati have been washed away*
PHOTOGRAPH: AHMER KHAN/THE GUARDIAN

Dil Bahadur Shrestha, 70, had been tending to his rice fields and feeding his cows on the opposite bank when he felt the ground tremble and saw

4

Tycoon found not guilty of role in murder of Maltese journalist

Juliette Garside
Valletta

One of Malta’s richest men has been found not guilty of involvement in the murder of the anti-corruption journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

The verdict, which is expected to be subject to an appeal by the prosecution, came as a blow not only to the victim’s family but also to the campaigners who regard the case as a landmark action in the fight to protect press freedom in Europe.

Nearly nine years after Caruana Galizia’s death, aged 53, in a car bombing in October 2017, a jury of six women and three men found Yorgen Fenech, 44, not guilty of complicity in the voluntary homicide of Caruana Galizia, and association with the intention of committing a crime.

Delivered at 7.30pm yesterday, the verdict was decisive. To gasps from the gallery and

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A makeshift memorial to Daphne Caruana Galizia in Valletta in 2018. She targeted Yorgen Fenech and leading political figures in her anti-corruption reporting

PHOTOGRAPHS: DARRIN ZAMMIT LUPI/ REUTERS

Maltese tycoon acquitted of role in Daphne Caruana Galizia murder

Continued *from page 1*

cheers from Fenech's relatives, the forewoman announced jurors had voted to dismiss both counts by an eight to one majority.

As the family listened in shock, with some relatives in tears, the judge, Edwina Grima, ordered Fenech's release from custody. He left court via the front entrance, without responding to requests for comment.

"Everybody is much more at risk now, because this signals you can kill journalists with impunity," Caruana Galizia's sister Corinne Vella said. "We knew an acquittal was a huge possibility. But it's like when someone dies, it still shocks you."

On Facebook, the journalist's eldest son decried a "terrible decision by the jurors that our country may never recover from. They had a great responsibility to deliver justice. And washed their hands of it."

The leader of the opposition Nationalist party, Alex Borg, requested the urgent reopening of parliament, which is currently in recess, to discuss the verdict.

Fenech, an influential businessman and property developer whose family owns two Hilton hotels and has a share in a power station in Malta, had been accused of paying €150,000 via a middleman, Melvin Theuma, to have the journalist killed.

The murder of Caruana Galizia, who focused on Fenech and leading politicians in her reporting, became a rallying point for anti-corruption. The fallout resulted in Joseph Muscat, the then prime minister, being forced out of office.

The two-month trial laid bare the extent of Fenech's political contacts, and raised questions about attempts to interfere with the police investigation. Key witnesses, and the defendant himself, claimed the prime minister's chief of staff had repeatedly leaked information to Fenech.

Forensic experts at work in a field in Bidnija, Malta, after a powerful bomb blew up Caruana Galizia's car in 2017, killing the 53-year-old journalist

Summing up, the prosecutor Anthony Vella said Fenech believed he could "buy justice", telling the jury: "You are being asked to decide whether a man who had extensive contacts in politics and among the heads of public entities had enough power to pay for Daphne to be killed."

The defence argued the chain of command went higher, with suggestions from Fenech that Muscat's former chief of staff Keith Schembri had ordered the killing. They said police had not done enough to investigate allegations. "All roads lead to Keith, and all bridges to Keith were burned," defence lawyer Charles Mercieca said in his summing up.

Giannella de Marco, another of Fenech's lawyers, said the prosecution's chief witness had not been believed. "The jurors did not believe Melvin Theuma. It was an 8-1 verdict ... don't you think jurors saw who the real masterminds were?" she said. "Justice for Daphne has to go further."

In his testimony, Fenech told the jury: "I never ordered Daphne Caruana Galizia's murder, or anyone else's. I had no role in her murder." He said he had merely acted as a messenger between Schembri and Theuma, and that the taxi driver had blackmailed him. Schembri, who gave evidence at the trial, denied all wrongdoing, saying he had no involvement in leaks and no knowledge of the murder.

Repubblika, a campaign group, called for a "national reckoning". "Those politically responsible for the culture of impunity of the Muscat years must not be rehabilitated into public life," a spokesperson said.

An independent public inquiry concluded in 2021 that the state had to shoulder responsibility for the assassination because it "created an atmosphere of impunity, generated from the highest levels". Many of its recommendations have yet to be implemented.

The Daphne Foundation, a non-profit established by the journalist's family, said: "Nine years after Daphne's brutal assassination, the institutional failures that enabled her murder remain unaddressed and unreformed. Lasting justice means no person should ever face the same risks again. Our country failed to protect Daphne's life. It owes it to her to prevent other lives being lost."

Polanski gains local support to stand for Starmer's vacated seat

Alexandra Topping
Political correspondent

Zack Polanski moved a step closer in his quest to become an MP yesterday, with local Green party members supporting him to become their candidate in the Holborn and St Pancras byelection.

The Green leader in England and Wales campaigned in the Holborn area on Tuesday, and is considering putting himself forward for the seat vacated by Keir Starmer on Monday.

Green party sources said local members would have the final say on the selected candidate, but the Guardian understands that they are supportive of Polanski running. It is understood that candidates will be selected by the end of next week.

Lorna Jane Russell, the leader of the Greens on Camden council, will not stand, having said she wanted to focus on her role as leader of the opposition at Camden Town Hall and her pregnancy.

On the first anniversary of his election as party leader, Polanski said the byelection would be a "referendum on ending rip-off Britain", adding: "I am very excited for the next chapter for myself, for the Greens and for people across the country."

Sources inside the party said the surge in membership since Polanski became leader made him the favourite for the role.

"There would be a lot of excitement about him standing," said one Green party source. "This is the kind of seat that has always had high-profile figures and I think having someone with Zack's profile would play very well with local party members."

The move is not without risk for Polanski, with the former prime minister's seat traditionally considered to be safe for Labour. In a difficult political climate in the May local elections, Labour lost seats but held on to Camden council.

Zack Polanski said he was 'very excited for the next chapter'

Tulip Siddiq, the Labour MP for Hampstead and Highgate, said party members were confident they could retain the seat. "I know Camden through and through and I do believe that we can win this," she said.

Labour will not run an all-women shortlist and will announce its candidate by Wednesday, with applications closing tomorrow and shortlisting expected by the start of next week.

The frontrunner is thought to be Sagal Abdi-Wali, who came to the UK as a child refugee from Somalia and has been the leader of Camden council since May. "She's got a compelling personal story and can reach people from all faiths and backgrounds in Camden," said one Labour source.

Adam Hug, who lost his job as leader of Westminster council after the Conservatives took overall control in May's local election, is also being mooted, as is Nash Ali, a former mayor of Camden, and Rishi Madlani, a former Camden councillor.

Unsung hero

Sheen on the epic story of a Welsh rebel leader

▶ *Michael Sheen will play Owain Glyndŵr in Cardiff in a new play about the leader of a 15th-century rebellion against the crown*

PHOTOGRAPH: DIMITRIS LEGAKIS/ ATHENA PICTURES

▲ *Glyndŵr was voted the second most important Welsh person ever*

Steven Morris

There are myriad films, plays and books focusing on heroes of English, Scottish and Irish history but far fewer that tell the stories of the great figures of Wales.

A major new play about the Welsh nobleman Owain Glyndŵr's early 15th-century rebellion against the English crown will help redress the balance this autumn.

Michael Sheen, who will play Glyndŵr, said one of the main rationales for staging the show was simply that the rebel leader's story had never before been told on such a large scale.

"We're talking about a figure voted the second most important Welsh person of all time, only behind Aneurin Bevan [the architect of the NHS]," Sheen said. "But nobody's ever done anything about him on this scale before. That tells a story in itself."

Sheen said that when growing up in south Wales he had not been taught about Glyndŵr's rebellion against Henry IV. "He meant absolutely nothing. I was never taught about him. At some point I became aware of his name but I knew nothing about his story.

"I was never taught Welsh history. It wasn't on the curriculum. And again, that tells you something."

Owain & Henry will be staged at the Donald Gordon theatre at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff, the second biggest stage in Europe, by Sheen's fledgling company, the Welsh National Theatre.

'Just putting the play on is important, but Owain Glyndŵr's story is a catalyst for a conversation that we need to have'

Sheen said there were very few ambitious, large-scale Welsh plays written for big theatre spaces. "For most Welsh playwrights, the reality of getting your play produced is that you probably have to write for a studio space. Maybe a couple of weeks' run. And maybe a cast of maybe two or three. Beyond that, it becomes very difficult."

Sheen said the Olivier-award-winning Welsh playwright Gary Owen had only felt able to create a sweeping version of the Glyndŵr story when the pandemic seemed to make it unlikely that it would ever be produced.

He said: "During Covid, during the lockdown, he thought: no one's going to ever see this play anyway, so I might as well write it the way I want to write it."

Sheen described Glyndŵr as a very unlikely rebel. "He was born into privilege. He inherited estates. He worked in the service of English noblemen. Fought on behalf of the English king, Richard II, in Scotland, against the French. He was taught at the Inns of Court.

"But then he got into a land dispute with his neighbour [the Englishman Reginald de Grey]. And this land dispute grew and grew and grew until eventually he was essentially being called a traitor.

"He wasn't the big crusading rebel leader. He found himself in a position where he had to fight back, otherwise bad things were going to happen for him and his family. So he was sort of forced into it."

Sheen said he thought the Glyndŵr story, which will be performed in English, was relevant today. "Just putting it on is important, I think, but also the story is a kind of catalyst for a conversation that we very much need to have at the moment."

In May, the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru won the Welsh Senedd elections in spectacular fashion, ending 100 years of Labour dominance in Wales.

It means that two governments – the devolved Plaid Welsh administration and the Labour UK government – have a say in the life of Welsh citizens.

Sheen said: "The old has been swept away. And the immediate future of Wales is essentially in the hands of two very different visions of what it is to be Welsh, what Welsh identity is, what Welsh nationhood can be.

"This play speaks to that, absolutely. Even though we're talking about events in the early 1400s, it speaks to us right now in a more urgent way than I could ever have imagined.

"But also beyond Wales, it's looking at what is it to be a leader? What is leadership? What is a responsible use of power? Is might right? They're all things that feel very, alive right now."

Owain & Henry is at the Donald Gordon theatre from 5-28 November

Central flat, nice cat. Fake listing for No 10 shown on Booking.com

Ben Quinn

Successive politicians have clawed their way past colleagues over the years to call the residence home. Yet in an offer that probably seemed too good to be true, the travel site Booking.com has been accused of "systemic security failures" after it was able to accept payment for a fake listing for 10 Downing Street.

A holiday rental listing for a "1 bedroom apartment in the heart of London" – with the address and a photo of the prime minister's home – was posted on 18 June by researchers from the consumer group Which?.

The listing required users to request a stay and they were unable to reserve automatically. The booking window opened briefly so that a test could be carried out by a Which? researcher. It said the site had processed a payment for a week's stay.

The money had still not been refunded more than six weeks after it had been set up, according to the Consumers' Association charity, the governing body of Which?.

A fake review for the listing was also posted, describing the stay as "exceptional", noting the experience of "hanging out with Larry the cat", Downing Street's resident feline.

Despite Booking.com sending a message saying the review would be checked by a team of moderators, the consumer group said it had been added almost immediately.

The listing was removed on 27 August, six weeks after it went live. Rory Boland, the editor of Which? Travel, said: "If Booking.com's so-called sophisticated AI systems can't spot that 10 Downing Street is not a holiday rental, then it's no wonder scammers can exploit the platform so easily."

▲ *Larry the cat outside No 10. The fake listing has raised security fears*

Which? said it had "uncovered systemic security failures across the platform" and urged Ofcom, the communications regulator, to investigate.

A Booking.com spokesperson said: "The property added by Which? was not visible to customers or 'live' for the time period referenced."

It added that as the property was not bookable some of its fraud controls had not been triggered.

An Ofcom spokesperson said platforms had an obligation to take down illegal content generated by users. "Booking.com is not in scope of future rules [on] paid-for fraudulent advertising, and any change would be a matter for government," they said.

‘So many swept away’ Unimaginable suffering in Nepal’s worst-hit districts

Source: Vantor

Continued *from page 1*

a black wave, hundreds of metres high, coming down the valley. He ran to safety in the forest, but not before watching two bridges get swept away behind him. “When it hit, everything was destroyed within two minutes,” he said.

He knows in his heart that his wife is gone, but like thousands caught up in the disaster, her body has yet to be found and she is counted among the missing. More than 5,000 people are reported missing in Nepal and a further 546 in the Tibet region of China.

Rescue workers have still not reached his home, so he has returned to try to retrieve her body himself. “Maybe she thought the flood wouldn’t reach inside the house,” he said, wiping away tears.

The couple had already rebuilt their home once after an earthquake in 2015 that killed about 9,000 people. As he spoke, his frail body collapsed to the barren, muddy ground where his neighbour’s house once stood.

“Even now, I cannot believe that she is gone,” he said. “I cannot forget her. That’s why I keep walking around looking for her. I keep getting this feeling that she might still be here, looking after the chickens and the goats.”

The scale of the tragedy in Betrawati is unfathomable. It was 8.37am when a melting glacier high up in the Himalayas on the border between Nepal and Tibet crashed into the valley below, setting off deadly flash floods down Nepal’s Bhotekoshi and Trishuli rivers. By 8.50am, with only a few minutes’ warning, the settlement of Betrawati was engulfed.

This once-thriving market town was submerged in mud so thick that only the top two floors of a six-storey building are visible. Most houses were washed away entirely or flipped on their sides by the sheer force of the floods. School buses lie overturned. A grocery shop was swept 200 metres from its original location and lies in ruins. The river itself has diverted to a new path that cuts through where the highway once was.

Fragments of the lives of the thousands who lived here lie scattered in the debris: kettles, teddy bears, saucepans, medicine packets, a pair of glasses. At least 250 people are missing, Dil Bahadur Shrestha’s brother and sister-in-law among them.

▲ *Clockwise from main: Dil Bahadur Shrestha among the ruins of his house in Betrawati; the once-thriving market town is now submerged in thick mud; the army base at Dhunche, from where helicopters fly in and out; child survivors of the flash floods*

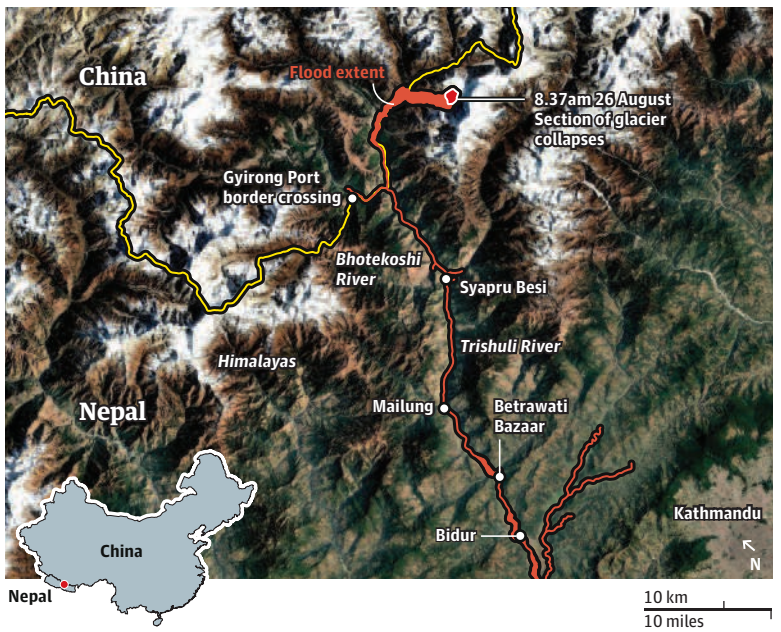
As he surveyed the ruins of his life, search and rescue teams stood on the opposite bank, looking for the dead. By the end of the day, they had pulled 24 bodies from a single house. A helicopter thundered overhead, white body bags swinging underneath.

“I feel there could still be hundreds of bodies here,” said Dil Bahadur Shrestha. “So many people were swept away all at once, carried off by the raging water.” His voice broke: “Now I’m alone. I am completely alone.”

A few metres away, Santamaya Lawat, 57, stood shaking a thick cake of dirt from the few clothes and blankets she had been able to retrieve from her brother’s home, now only partly standing, with a gaping hole in the side. Her own house, built just 10 months ago with her life’s savings, was still so filled with mud she had not yet been able to get inside. Five members of her family are gone.

“This was supposed to be the house I lived in for the rest of my life, but everything is gone. It was

Photographs: Ahmer Khan/the Guardian



like heaven here and now it has been turned into hell," she said.

Further up the river, in the district of Rasuwa, on the border with Tibet, the scale of destruction only gets worse. Many of the villages here were swept away entirely and are only accessible by army helicopter. Some are still so cut-off and the ground conditions so precarious that the fate of hundreds of people remains unknown. On Tuesday, police search and rescue teams confirmed they had finally been able to begin ground operations in the border village of Timure, recovering 90 bodies so far.

A week on, survivors who fled up mountainsides are still being collected by army helicopters and evacuated to the army base in Dhunche, Rasuwa district's administrative headquarters.

The mountain village of Syabru Besi was among those wiped clean away, with even the road to it gone. According to local government officials, at least 500 people are missing, a quarter of the population. It resembles nothing more than a muddy riverbed now, just one building left standing.

Chhiring Dorje, a 50-year-old farmer, was among those who managed to escape Syabru Besi, but five of his family are now missing. "There were 15 or 16 of us from the village who made it safely to the forest," said Dorje. "We stayed there for two days before the army came in a helicopter. We had nothing to eat. We survived by drinking water from the forest."

He stood tightly holding the hand of his nine-year-old granddaughter, Ritu Tamang, as they waited at Dhunche army base for a ride down to Kathmandu. Rescue helicopters thundered in and out every few minutes. She said quietly that there was "nothing left where our house used to be. I used to go to school and was in Grade 1. Now the school is gone. There are no teachers either."

With the highways washed away, the only road from Kathmandu to Rasuwa is a perilous unpaved track of mud and stones, weaving through tiny mountain villages. The journey often takes more than 12 hours. The treacherous conditions have made it difficult for aid to reach the worst-hit areas and hindered the rescue and relief operations. Many aid lorries are now stuck in Dhunche, unable to drive any further north.

At a small relief camp on the road between Betrawati and Dhunche set up by Nepal's Dhulikhel hospital, people collected medicine and food supplies. Doctors said dozens of the children here had lost their parents in the floods. More than 200 local children from the Nilakantha school, most aged between five and 11, are also missing, believed washed away as they walked to morning classes.

Prakash Nepal, a teacher, said the school received a warning just 10 minutes before the flood waters hit, when the school bus was already picking up students. "Luckily, we immediately contacted the bus driver and the vehicle stopped midway so the students were able to survive. The surge of water did reach the vehicle, did not cause much damage."

However, many of the local families had been displaced by the 2015 earthquake and still lived in informal settlements along the riverbank. Most of those children had been walking to school when the flood struck. Prakash Nepal's eyes welled with tears: "We could not save the students who were still on the road."

Amid the tragedy, there were also small stories of hope. Sitting on the porch of their village home in Lachyang, Ram Krishna Neupane, 69, and his wife, Muiya Neupane, 66, said their only son had been working as a vet in Syabru Besi when the village was hit.

For two days after the disaster, they had heard nothing and feared he was dead. Then a phone call arrived. "He called up from a hospital in Kathmandu. He had been rescued by the army," said Ram Krishna Neupane. "He could not speak, he was crying so much, and we were crying." It was, added his wife, "a miracle".

Additional reporting
Gaurav Pokharel

Aid response
Initial US offer derided as 'pitiful' by relief agency veterans

Robert Tait
Washington

Aid experts have denounced the US's "embarrassing" and "pitiful" initial response to the Nepal flood disaster after the US state department announced it was releasing $500,000 (£371,000) in emergency funds to help the relief effort.

The modest sum - which has since been increased - allocated in response to the devastation caused by mudslides in the mountainous Asian country was mocked on social media, where users contrasted it with the amount spent on Trump administration priorities.

The death toll from last week's flash floods has passed 1,000, with 4,400 people still unaccounted, according to officials in Nepal and China. Rescue teams are trying to find workers trapped in hydropower tunnels, which were buried in mud.

The US contribution has been raised to $3.6m, which state department officials say will be used to deliver food assistance to feed 10,000 affected households for up to three months, and pay for emergency items such as blankets, mosquito nets and shelter sheets.

However, seasoned humanitarian aid specialists suggest even that contribution is inadequate and say the US response has shrunk to a shadow of its previous capacity by the dismantling of USAID, the country's main foreign assistance organisation, after Donald Trump's return to the White House last year.

The organisation's functions were taken over by the state department after USAID was terminated as an independent agency in July 2025 after being dismantled by the unofficial "department of government efficiency" led by Elon Musk.

The state department says the US continues to support Nepal's flood early warning system through grants.

However, foreign aid specialists highlighted the initial $500,000 sum as symbolic of the inadequacy of current US efforts compared with what would have been offered before USAID was dissolved. The state department has countered by saying it "was designed to get immediate assistance moving while assessments were under way" and insisted the dismantling of USAID had "not slowed the US response".

Mark Ward, a former head of USAID's disaster response team, called the announcement "embarrassing for the United States and a bit of a slap at Nepal".

Under USAID, Ward said, the amount would have been decided by a disaster assistance response team, which would have been on the ground immediately to assess needs because of the close working relationship the agency had with Nepal, a known natural disaster zone.

"They would have done an assessment very quickly with the Nepalese authorities, and then we would have decided on a number," said Ward. "I'm sure it would have been a lot more than the figure that we've seen."

His sentiments were echoed by George Ingram, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a former staff member of the House of Representatives foreign affairs committee.

"I was embarrassed for America," he said. "It would have been better for them not to announce it.

"It's too early to know what the total magnitude of the US assistance should be, but an initial offering of half a million dollars is pitiful. I do not recall a major disaster like this in which the US initial reaction was such a paltry amount."

Ward, who worked on previous disasters in Nepal, underlined USAID's links with the country.

"There was no country that we had a better relationship with than Nepal in their disaster management, for the simple reason that nobody has more disasters than Nepal because of its topography," he said."

A state department spokesperson defended the US response as "fast, flexible, and driven by conditions on the ground - not arbitrary funding targets".

"This is a needs-based, adaptive model that allows the United States to get assistance out the door immediately rather than waiting for a complete picture of a rapidly evolving disaster," the spokesperson said.

▲ *Donald Trump has dismantled the USAID agency in his second term*

State department relief

$500,000
Initial release of emergency funds by the US state department to support Nepal, later increased to $3.6m

10,000
Number of households the US state department says it will give food and other aid to for up to three months

4,400
People still missing after the flash floods close to Nepal's border with China. The death toll is above 1,000

Plenty of puff The annual Ride the Lights event in Blackpool, when the promenade is closed to cars and thousands of cyclists are given the chance to preview the illuminations before they are officially switched on tomorrow.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND/THE GUARDIAN

Internal exclusions in England's secondary schools nearly treble

Sally Weale
Education correspondent

The proportion of secondary school students in England removed from class and placed in internal exclusion has almost trebled in three years.

Data shows the proportion of pupils taken out of lessons rose from 5% in the 2022-23 academic year to 13% in 2025-26 - a 160% increase.

Poorer children are disproportionately affected, with 22% taken out of class at least once in 2025-26, up from 8% three years ago. The figure was 10% for non-disadvantaged pupils.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities are also over-represented, as 18% with an education, health and care plan were removed from class at least once.

Critics say putting pupils into internal exclusion - which varies between schools but is sometimes described as an "isolation room" - can damage mental wellbeing and result in lost learning. Others say it is an effective tool in behaviour management.

The data was collected and analysed by Arbor, a management information system used by 13,000 schools across England, and shared exclusively with the Guardian.

Less than 1% of primary pupils were internally excluded at least once over the last academic year.

Unlike permanent exclusions and fixed-term suspensions, when pupils are sent home, internal exclusions require children to remain on site.

160%
Rise in the proportion of pupils taken out of lessons from the 2022-23 academic year to 2025-26

Arbor's CEO, James Weatherill, said: "We know from schools that internal exclusion can be an important alternative to sending a pupil home. But the scale of this increase, particularly among disadvantaged pupils, should prompt us to look more closely at what is driving it."

Official figures published by the Department for Education show that formal suspensions and exclusions fell last year.

Weatherill said: "The divergence underlines why government needs a more complete picture of how many pupils are being removed from their normal lessons, for how long, and with what consequences."

Pepe Di'Iasio, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "Internal exclusions are never used lightly but only after other avenues have been exhausted. They are a step short of an external exclusion and are designed to keep the student in school with appropriate learning support."

Lily Wielar, a researcher at the Education Policy Institute, said: "Classroom removal has become a deeply embedded feature of behaviour management in England's secondary schools.

"We urgently need to know more about how classroom removal is being used, and to ensure that removed pupils have the same legal protections and transparency that apply elsewhere."

Tom Bennett, a leading expert in behaviour management, said: "Internal exclusions are, of course, a form of inclusion ... It means that learning can be delivered on site, and in an environment where staff ratios are higher, work can be done on their social skills and behaviour, but away from the students whose learning and safety has been damaged - because they matter too."

The DfE was contacted for comment.

Baby found dead in house had been stabbed 15 times, court told

Josh Halliday
North of England editor

A newborn baby girl died from multiple stab wounds before she was found on top of a washing machine in an outhouse in Sheffield, a court has heard.

Two men and two women appeared in court yesterday charged with the murder of the newborn, named only as Baby S. She was found with 33 wounds from 15 separate stabbings when police were called to a property in the Wincobank area of the city on Sunday.

Andrea Skopova, 20, and Peter Horvath Jr, 19, have been charged with the baby's murder, as have Horvath Jnr's parents, Peter Horvath Sr, 38, and Nina Horvathova, 37.

The four, all from Slovakia, are additionally charged with causing or allowing the death of a child and perverting the course of justice by taking steps to conceal the killing of an infant.

Police were called to a property in Holywell Heights on Sunday morning after reports of concern for the safety of an infant. The prosecutor Luke Hopkinson told the court that Baby S was found wrapped in a towel in a blue bag in an outbuilding at an address in Holywell Heights.

A 15-year-old girl, who cannot be named for legal reasons because of her age, has been charged with perverting the course of justice.

The district judge Tim Spruce decided she should be remanded in youth custody until today, when she will appear at crown court with the other defendants. The four adults were all remanded in custody.

Two women, 26 and 37, who were arrested on suspicion of murder remain on bail.

DCI Tom Woodward, of South Yorkshire police, said: "We would ask the public to avoid speculating and posting information online about this case while the legal process takes it course. Protecting the integrity of the criminal justice process is crucial to us securing justice for this little girl."

Bouquets of flowers had been left by a police cordon near the property in Holywell Heights yesterday.

Khan fined after scammer falsely registers untaxed car in his name

Ben Quinn
Political correspondent

Sadiq Khan's office has revealed he was the victim of a scam that led to him being fined for failing to tax a car that did not belong to him.

The London mayor was found guilty last month under a system of "conveyor-belt justice", in which magistrates decide on hundreds of cases a day, sometimes spending less than a minute on each.

City hall officials say the 24-year-old Nissan Micra did not belong to Khan or Transport for London.

The mayor has been the focus of protests by motorists angry at the expansion of the ultra-low emission zone. Some said they planned to register cars in Khan's name to make him liable for the £12.50 daily charge.

The prosecution was undertaken by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), which accused Khan of being the keeper of the vehicle when it was spotted as being untaxed on 24 January.

In a move which paves the way for the conviction to be erased after a court hearing today, the DVLA said yesterday evening that the case had been withdrawn after a review and it was investigating the circumstances.

"This is a scam, which is a crime," said a spokesperson for Khan. "It's not the first time the mayor has been the victim of a scam involving people falsely stating that Sadiq is the owner of a vehicle. Such behaviour is illegal, and the DVLA are aware."

A magistrate, sitting in a private hearing of the single justice procedure in Herefordshire, convicted Khan in his absence and ordered that he pay a £220 fine, £85 in costs and settle the £35.84 bill for unpaid tax on the Micra.

The Press Association alerted the DVLA to the criminal conviction on Tuesday and its officials confirmed they were reviewing the case and investigating the circumstances of the prosecution.

Court documents show that DVLA letters addressed to the mayor about the unpaid tax bill were sent to a Gordon Ramsay restaurant instead of nearby Transport for London offices.

The single justice procedure was introduced in 2015 as a cheaper method of dealing with low-level criminal cases.

▲ *Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, has been targeted by the scam before*

Ministers unaware of what datacentres are being used for

Pippa Neill
Environment reporter

The UK government does not know what datacentres are being used for, despite fears over the growing environmental impact of the AI boom.

When asked in a freedom of information (FoI) request who was using the largest UK sites and what for, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology said it did "not hold the requested information". The ministry has since been dissolved.

With hundreds of datacentres awaiting planning permission and 315 queueing to connect to the National Grid, there is growing concern over a lack of transparency and justification for these projects.

Ministers announced plans in January to allow qualifying datacentres to opt into the nationally significant infrastructure project scheme. This allows developments to bypass local planning committees by securing approval from the government. Campaigners say this "insulates" datacentres from local scrutiny.

Zack Polanski, the Green party leader in England and Wales, said: "The government plans to steamroller over local opposition so private companies can build these facilities – yet they can't even explain what the benefits are and who is benefiting."

Datacentres use a huge amount of resources. The Guardian revealed last month that two planned sites will have higher carbon emissions than ExxonMobil in the UK.

The government designated datacentres as critical national infrastructure in 2024 and campaigners fear this could mean the water-hungry sites are prioritised over households in times of drought.

Water UK, the trade body representing water companies in Britain and Northern Ireland, warned in July that the UK did not have enough water for the datacentre expansion.

> ***'They can't even say what the benefits are and who's benefiting'***
>
> **Zack Polanski**
> *Green party leader*

Polanski said: "What is more 'critical' than people's access to water? What is more 'critical' than our need to transition to a low-energy, low-pollution world so we can put the brakes on climate extremes?"

While there is consensus that datacentres can provide some essential services, there are concerns that developments with a huge environmental impact, and that face local opposition, are being prioritised regardless of their use.

Oliver Hayes of Global Action Plan, the environmental charity that submitted the FoI request, said: "It's highly likely that we're going to end up seeing datacentres given favourable and preferential treatment when it comes to resources that are actually running chatbots or enabling people to do … pointless things.

"At the more serious end, these datacentres could be powering chatbots that enable people to nudify teens without their consent and much worse, frankly."

With reports that the Scottish government is inching towards a moratorium on new datacentres, pressure is growing for the UK government to follow suit.

Friends of the Earth is calling for a ban on new sites until environmental safeguards are in place. It wants the government to publish clear environmental rules for new and existing datacentres, including requirements for 100% additional renewable energy generation for new projects.

Anisah Khan, the campaigns manager of Global Action Plan, said: "When individuals across the country are facing hosepipe bans and essential housebuilding is being delayed because datacentres are gobbling up grid connections, what we need is not more chatbots at any cost."

The government did not respond to a request for comment on its failure to say what large datacentres were being used for. A spokesperson said: "A pause on building new datacentres would simply send investment and good jobs abroad, while leaving Britain dependent on other countries for the processing of sensitive health and defence data."

▲ *King Charles and Queen Camilla with Emmanuel Macron at the Bayeux tapestry exhibition at the British Museum yesterday* PHOTOGRAPH: ADRIAN DENNIS/REUTERS

Bayeux tapestry loan 'a precious symbol of trust', says Charles

Caroline Davies

The loan of the Bayeux tapestry was "the best possible symbol" of the "*entente amicale*" between France and the UK, King Charles said as he visited the embroidered masterpiece at the British Museum in London.

Although the tapestry recounted a conflict, "here it is today, nearly 1,000 years later, as a precious symbol of trust, at a time when trust seems sadly to be in short supply between nations", he said.

The "70 metres of memory and artistry" were a reminder "that our two nations have been bound together for almost a millennium", added Charles at the exhibition alongside Andy Burnham and Emmanuel Macron, the French president.

In a speech partly delivered in French, he said: "We have defended our values together in times of peril; we continue to do so today."

He continued: "May this tapestry – and the treasures that will travel in return – stand as symbols not only of our shared past, but our shared future: a future woven, as it should be, by Britain and France together."

Macron said that with the tapestry in Britain, his hopes were that the two countries could "forge a bond as close as the threads of this thousand-year-old embroidery".

The tapestry – the woven record of the Norman conquest – has returned to the UK for the first time in almost 1,000 years and is on loan until September 2027 as part of a special trilateral agreement between the UK, France and the museum.

Charles's reference to *entente amicale* followed his use of the phrase to rebrand the historical "*entente cordiale*" between the two nations in his banquet speech at Windsor Castle when he hosted the Macrons in July last year.

During yesterday's visit he expressed his "deepest appreciation" to Macron and the French people "for the trust you have placed in the United Kingdom by agreeing to this unprecedented loan". He said: "It once depicted warriors crossing the Channel; yet today it forms part of a cultural exchange that will see some of the British Museum's own precious artefacts travel to France in return, in a spirit of friendship."

He added: "Anyone studying the tapestry's scenes will notice that even in the 11th century, historic events rarely happened without careful planning and organisation."

The party also included Queen Camilla, France's first lady, Brigitte Macron, and Burnham's wife, Marie-France van Heel. They stopped at key moments along the 11th-century artwork to hear from curators about historic events such as the much-disputed depiction of King Harold's death by an arrow to the eye at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

In exchange, Britain will loan the Sutton Hoo treasures, a selection of Lewis chess pieces and other masterpieces owned by trustees of the British Museum to French museums.

'I was not a fan': Trump 'happy' about Harry and Meghan's return

Victoria Bekiempis

Donald Trump has weighed in on the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's move back to Britain, declaring: "I'm happy about it."

"I was not a fan," the US president told reporters during a question-and-answer session after a press conference with travel executives yesterday. "I had a very good relationship with the queen, really good. I got to know her very well. A really good relationship with King Charles – I knew him as Prince Charles and King Charles. I've known him for a long time."

Trump, describing Charles as a "great, great guy", said he thought Harry and Meghan "treated the royal family with great disrespect".

"I didn't like it," he also said, adding: "If I were the royal family, I would not have taken them back."

The couple moved back to the UK last week, six years after they left for the US. They had lived in California since 2020. They have yet to speak publicly and are said to be settling for an "extended period" amid speculation as to how long they will stay, and where they will live.

Trump has a longstanding fascination and admiration for the royal family, which he traces back to a childhood memory of watching Queen Elizabeth II's coronation on TV in 1953 with his mother, Mary Anne Trump, who was born in Scotland. Trump adored the late queen, whom he described as a "great woman" who had "really never made a mistake".

The king is reportedly looking forward to spending more time with the duke and duchess in a personal capacity, but Harry, 41, and Meghan, 45, will remain private individuals.

Burnham tries to calm bond markets as sell-off threatens plans for budget

Continued from page 1

City and business figures gathered to hear the previous chancellor, Rachel Reeves, lay out her approach, in the Mais lecture.

In his first PMQs clash with Kemi Badenoch, Burnham blamed the Conservatives for leaving the UK vulnerable to market turmoil.

Criticising Burnham's three-hour statement in the Commons the day before, Badenoch said yesterday: "He did not say no to a single spending request … And personally, I think it's delightful that he wants to make everyone happy. But a prime minister needs to be a leader, not a people pleaser."

Burnham said his budget "will stick to the fiscal rules, but at the same time, we will help reduce cost of living pressure on our constituents."

Analysts believe higher interest rates on government debt could wipe out up to half of the £24bn headroom Reeves built up against Labour's fiscal rules.

Government insiders told the Guardian they believed it would be very hard for Healey to deliver a budget with less than double-digit headroom, given the signal it would send to bond markets – but that would leave him with almost no leeway for additional spending. No 10 sources declined to be drawn on Burnham's preferred level of headroom.

Healey will also have to show how the Treasury intends to fill the funding gap in the defence investment plan, and pay for Burnham's cost of living measures, including the VAT cut on electricity bills.

Helen Miller, director of the thinktank the Institute for Fiscal Studies, warned that "debt interest is now one in every £12 the government is spending, so even relatively small changes can add up quite quickly".

Alongside the narrowing margin for error against the rules, Miller identified two other budget headaches for Healey – the likely hit to growth forecasts from falling immigration; and the demand for more spending on defence.

"It's not that any one of these things on their own are the kind of hit the panic button moment, but when you add them all together, they do add real pressure on the government."

Ruth Curtice, director of the Resolution Foundation thinktank, said febrile markets meant the government would face additional scrutiny about the sustainability of the public finances. "The risk of not facing up to the challenges has gone up, but also maybe the reward from showing that you're serious about addressing them might have gone up too."

She backed a call by O'Neill for the new government to scrap the triple lock for pensions, as a way of

▲ *Andy Burnham leaves 10 Downing Street to attend his first prime minister's questions in the Commons yesterday* PHOTOGRAPH: DAN KITWOOD/GETTY

Sketch
John Crace

A new dawn for PMQs, even if the promise of more consensual politics was broken in minutes

Call it the gentlest of all reality checks. A quantum realignment in expectations. The faintest reminder to both Andy Burnham and Labour backbenchers that international bond markets are impervious to Manchester charm and positivity. Despite a summer of feelgood announcements from the government, there is no escaping the fact that the country is still up shit creek. It's going to be a tough ride ahead. Nothing will come pain-free.

Still, a new prime minister has to learn to take the wins – however small – as they come. In the wider scheme of things, a good prime minister's questions means next to nothing. Yet it can set the tone and buy some goodwill from MPs and the media. Plus, it's a weekly event so you may as well be good at it.

Burnham can be very pleased with his first outing, even if it didn't go totally as billed. We had been promised a more consensual politics, an end to point scoring. That lasted all of five minutes. After that, it was business as usual. Partly because that's the way PMQs has always been set up, but mainly because Burnham just couldn't help himself.

It would have taken a will of iron to resist. Not least because Kemi Badenoch made it so easy for him. Not for the first time, Labour's secret weapon is the Tory leader. She just can't help speaking without thinking, getting lost in her own sense of brilliance and failing to spot the traps she is setting for herself.

You could tell that Burnham was very nervous at the start. Understandably so. Twitchy. Not totally in command. PMQs is always an ordeal and never more so for a leader on whom so many Labour hopes have been pinned.

"It's good to be back at the dispatch box," he began, before listing some of the government's achievements, such as the number of small boat crossings being at their lowest for years. The Tories barely looked up. It was almost as if they had never been that bothered about illegal immigration, and they certainly weren't about to give Labour any credit. Opposition parties hate it when something goes well. There's nothing that suits them better than a country in crisis. They never seem to realise that one day they might be called upon to sort it out.

Not for the first time, Labour's secret weapon is the Tory leader. Badenoch just can't help speaking without thinking

Badenoch's opening ploy was flirtatious. Going out of her way to congratulate Burnham on his stamina. He merely nodded. A lot of people had said that. Then she decided she had had enough sweet-talk. That was Burnham's problem. Always promising the earth. Never daring to say no to anyone. Too desperate to be loved to be a good leader. So could he mention anything he had ever cut?

First the smile, then the reply. "Tax," Burnham said. This was effectively game over for PMQs. Badenoch had imagined a Keir Starmer-like evasion. She had never dreamed of this. Burnham spelled it out. He had removed VAT on electricity bills. He had cut business rates for pubs and hospitality venues.

Next, Badenoch turned to the bond markets. She seemed to think they had it in for Labour. Burnham kept it pleasant and polite. It was like this. The international bond markets didn't have a special grudge against him. This wasn't personal. They hadn't been waiting for Tuesday's statement, itching to put interest rates up.

This was a global problem. Other countries were also facing rising borrowing costs. And if Badenoch really wanted to know where the blame lay, she could take a look at her own party's 14 years of stagnant growth. It was the Tories who had trashed the economy. He was merely trying to pick up the pieces. He could also have blamed the Iran war, a war for which Badenoch had been initially enthusiastic.

Now Badenoch sounded almost hurt. As if a promise had been broken. Burnham had said there would be no more point scoring, and here he was openly point scoring. I know, I know, he said unapologetically. He just couldn't help himself. It was too tempting. It made him feel good to hear the laughs and support of his own backbenchers. PMQs wasn't all about him. It was a team sport.

So while he was about it, Burnham had plenty more points to

▲ *Andy Burnham at the dispatch box during his first appearance at prime minister's questions yesterday* PHOTOGRAPH: HOUSE OF COMMONS/REUTERS

score. Badenoch has yet to realise just how vulnerable she has made herself by appointing Andrew Griffith as shadow chancellor. The man who co-authored Liz Truss's mini-budget and was one of its most outspoken defenders.

For Labour this is an open goal and they are going to kick the ball into the net as often as possible. Badenoch may be a woman who doesn't believe in history. Who thinks each day is a surprising new beginning. But the country is still a long way from forgiving the Tory party for the lasting damage caused by 49 days of chaos.

After failing to rule out further tax rises and spending commitments, Burnham went back to his happy place. Good vibes, hope and positivity. All of which are enough to make this a

showing it is serious about balancing the books.

"Jim O'Neill was onto something, in that part of the test for markets is, are they prepared to do politically unpopular things, in the name of trying to sort some of these fiscal problems out?" Curtice said.

O'Neill had been mooted as a potential economic adviser to Burnham, but has instead gone public with criticism of the fledgling government.

A Treasury source insisted that unlike other major economies, including the US, the UK has a plan – inherited from Reeves – for reducing the government's deficit and bringing down debt. "To the extent that investors start looking at fiscal plans, we should start to distinguish ourselves in a positive way," they said.

Global markets have been spooked by higher oil costs, after the Middle East conflict resumed in recent days, resulting in higher expectations for future inflation. Investors now believe the Bank of England will step in and raise interest rates three times, to 4.5%, over the next year, to tackle inflation. That would push up mortgage costs just as ministers try to cut the cost of living.

Burnham will host Emmanuel Macron for talks in No 10 today as he begins to build his own relationships with European allies before the next stage of the UK's reset with the EU. He is expected to use the talks to push for greater cooperation with Europe to support British businesses and drive growth, with the French president a key figure in the pursuit of a closer trading relationship.

Downing Street sources suggested that while the EU reset would not officially be on the agenda – as the responsibility for any deal lies with Brussels – it was likely to come up in the margins of the bilateral discussions.

Burnham indicated in the Commons on Tuesday that the next reset summit – which was delayed by the EU from July after Keir Starmer was ousted as prime minister – could be held in November.

Nils Pratley *Page 32* →

Analysis
Peter Walker

What different times these are when a leader clearly relishes being at the dispatch box

The coming months will show whether Andy Burnham fits Kemi Badenoch's charge of a leader too obsessed with being liked to make hard choices. One thing, however, does seem clear from his first outing at yesterday's prime minister's questions: he likes saying yes.

The very first question came from a political opponent – Ann Davies of Plaid Cymru – but Burnham replied as if she was a valued constituent, saying he understood her worries about the prison early release scheme and hoped she could be reassured.

By the session's close, Burnham had responded patiently to MPs from nearly all benches of the Commons, even Reform UK, and committed to a series of in-person meetings, some for himself, others for colleagues.

Bonhomie is a necessarily limited political resource, even for new prime ministers who have promised to, as Burnham put it, focus on "problem solving rather than point scoring". And thus it was that by Kemi Badenoch's third question Burnham was blaming the economic legacy of previous Conservative governments. By the fourth he was bringing up Liz Truss's mini-budget, a near-weekly feature of Keir Starmer's PMQs repertoire.

In fairness, the latter was something of an open goal given Badenoch's decision to, in a weekend reshuffle of her shadow cabinet, give the top Treasury post to Andrew Griffith, who worked on and then stoutly defended Truss's 2022 fiscal debacle.

What did this 45 minutes of studied empathy, mixed in with a few above-the-knee tackles, tell us? As is generally the case with PMQs, not much in the way of definitive lessons, but it gave several interesting pointers.

PMQs is a hard skill to learn – even for someone such as Burnham, who spent over a decade in frontbench posts during his last period in parliament, and he is unlikely to sound as tentative again. Equally, facing a brand new opponent, Badenoch was obliged to test out a few areas of attack, seeing which might stick.

The bulk of these were based on a pre-existing Badenoch narrative that Burnham is perfectly nice but a people-pleaser, a "spendthrift prime minister who wants to say yes to everyone", as she put it.

Burnham did push back at times, insisting his early-weeks giveaways were fully costed and stressing the importance of fiscal discipline. More often he ignored the attacks, setting out a pledge – dismissed by Badenoch as mere "vibes" – to restore the nation's "sense of positivity, a sense of possibility".

When it comes assessing PMQs performances, there are two linked caveats, the first of which is that this is primarily a terrain for the pros and the geeks. Few beyond MPs, the media and political fans notice the weekly spectacle beyond a 20-second clip which might crop up in their social media feed.

The follow-on is that even doing well at PMQs brings limited benefits, beyond cheering up the faithful. Badenoch was regularly praised for making life uncomfortable for Starmer, but her party is still polling below the level of its disastrous 2024 election defeat. As a phenomenon, it has echoes of William Hague, a Tory leader who loved the Commons but was not loved by voters.

Nonetheless, Burnham and his MPs will do well to study Badenoch's PMQs attacks. Vibes will only get him so far, and with the fiscal clouds darkening, he will need to not only disappoint some people, but do so obviously.

For Badenoch, a first PMQs against Burnham will have told her nothing new, just reinforced lessons that are not wholly comfortable. To begin with, despite his long absence from parliament, Burnham showed he can hold his own – at PMQs and at Tuesday's debut, where he answered 125 questions over three hours.

Badenoch should also be mindful of the universal political rule first set out by the pollster and focus group expert Luke Tryl: all things being equal, voters prefer politicians who look as if they actually enjoy the job over those who make it feel like a chore.

Yes, he was nervous, at times hesitant. But Burnham clearly relished being at the dispatch box, the centre of attention and scrutiny, something Starmer managed rarely if ever. These are different times.

PMQs is a hard skill to learn – even for someone such as Burnham, who spent more than a decade in frontbench posts

comfortable first PMQs. But he will be more than aware that this is a half-hour bubble and that life will only get tougher outside it.

Though Burnham appears to be a sucker for work. He spent the rest of the session offering meetings to virtually every MP. Soon his whole life will be one long meeting. Or a meeting to find out why a meeting was not necessary. Meetings to rule out further meetings. Still, I am sure he will enjoy his meeting with Samantha Niblett, whose stated mission has been to have a summer of sex. And to tell as many people as possible about it.

Not everything went Burnham's way. A disgruntled Tan Dhesi, the Labour chair of the defence select committee, was grumpy about the 3% promise. Or possibly about not being asked to be a minister. Still, Burnham looked happy enough when the speaker called time. The first PMQs was over and he was 1-0 up. Not that anyone was keeping the score. Much.

Mega-donors Labour MPs demand cap before next election

Rowena Mason
Whitehall editor

Andy Burnham's government has vowed to "tackle the issue of mega-donors in UK politics" as soon as possible, with dozens of Labour MPs demanding an immediate cap on donations before the next election.

The government outlined plans for a new taskforce that will look at dealing with the influence of donors giving multimillion-pound contributions and suggested they wanted to find a "solution" to the issue quickly.

Burnham has previously backed the idea of an annual donations cap in correspondence with a campaigner but the Guardian revealed last week that he was not in favour of including it in the new representation of the people bill debated by MPs yesterday.

Trade unions have been pushing back against the idea of a donation cap over fears that a rightwing government could take steps to stop large donations from their movement.

But during the debate, a number of MPs, led by Labour's Stella Creasy, made the case for a cap on donations to help restore trust in democracy and argued that there were ways of bringing in limits that would not restrict union funding.

Florence Eshalomi, the democracy minister, told the Commons that the government had already put forward a significant package to stop British donors overseas giving large sums and that it was prepared to do more on the issue of big money in politics.

"The secretary of state and the prime minister are determined to tackle the UK-based issue of mega-donors in UK politics," she said, promising a "new cross-government taskforce to work at pace to find a solution without unintended consequences".

Eshalomi said: "Once these solutions have been found we would want them in force as soon as possible."

In the end, Creasy withdrew her amendment after assurances from the minister about tackling the issue of UK-based mega-donors.

The primary purpose of the bill is to lower the voting age to 16 and cap donations by Britons based abroad at £100,000 per year. It will also include a ban on cryptocurrency donations until they are not deemed to be a risk by the Electoral Commission.

Any changes to the ban would have to be lifted by further primary legislation, in a win for campaigners who were pushing for it to be permanent rather than a temporary moratorium.

Last week, the prime minister's aides said that while he is not backing a donations cap now, he is not ruling one out in the future. A Labour source said: "This bill was designed to deliver our manifesto commitments, but we're not ruling out taking further steps to protect our democracy."

Farage likens standards inquiry to cases against fellow 'outsider' Trump

Rowena Mason *Whitehall editor*
Helena Horton

Nigel Farage has compared his situation to Donald Trump's, saying they are both "outsiders" up against "the system", as he admitted having become tetchy and aggrieved.

The Reform UK leader has faced huge scrutiny over his finances after failing to declare a £5m gift from the Thailand-based donor Christopher Harborne and further financial support from a friend, the convicted fraudster George Cottrell, before the last election.

Harborne's gift is the subject of an inquiry by parliament's standards commissioner, which resumed last month after Farage won a byelection in Clacton. Farage maintains the gifts were accepted in a personal and non-political capacity.

Speaking in a BBC interview before Reform UK's conference, which begins today, he was dismissive of the investigation, suggesting any sanction imposed was unlikely to be fair.

He claimed there was a "wilful attempt, and it's gone on now for months, to say that everything to do with Reform, that every individual involved with Reform is somehow a crook" - which he dismissed as "the establishment in a very coordinated way fighting back".

The Reform leader also suggested the investigations, which he characterised as "attacks", were similar to those against Trump. During his first presidency and after first leaving office, Trump railed against the criminal cases against him. He recently failed to overturn 34 felony convictions against him for falsifying business records.

Drawing a comparison with the investigations into Trump, Farage said: "Very similar things happened to Trump in America. They went after him for year after year after year.

"I can see the similarities because again, he was an outsider, he wasn't part of the system. So look, we've had to weather this for the last few months. I've little doubt the attacks won't stop, but I am utterly confident ... in terms of the growth, the professionalisation of this organisation, our compliance checks, all of those things, I think we're in a strong place."

Farage suggested he was likely to be interviewed by the standards commissioner soon, as he dismissed criticism of him for failing to register the £5m gift as a sign of a "complainants' society".

The Reform UK leader was pressed on whether his tone had been out of character this summer, after some in the party questioned if he had sounded like too much of a victim. Asked about whether he could have taken a more optimistic tone, Farage claimed his family had been targeted with threats to their security and "another huge bout of debanking".

"Have I been pretty ratty over that and upset over that? I will accept. Hands up. I might not have quite been my normal self over the last few months, but you know when it's your own family, it's close to home," he said. Farage appeared to reject any suggestion of a reconciliation with Restore Britain, which is run by the former Reform MP Rupert Lowe and is posing a threat to the party's vote on the hard right.

Reform UK has also banned at least three journalists who have reported on the party and Farage critically from its annual conference.

The Guardian's City editor, Anna Isaac, the investigative reporter Peter Geoghegan and the broadcaster and biographer Michael Crick were told this week that their credentials to cover the event had been declined.

A Reform spokesperson said Geoghegan and Crick had been refused accreditation because the party saw them as minor figures. They declined to comment on why Isaac had not been given accreditation.

After the Guardian contacted Reform for comment, all three received emails saying their passes had been reinstated. However, a party spokesperson later said this had been an administrative error. They then received further emails confirming their exclusion.

A Guardian spokesperson said: "Holding public figures to account is the role of a free press and an essential part of the democratic process. Our journalists should be able to ask questions in the public interest and not be deterred from doing their job."

▼ *Nigel Farage admitted he had been 'ratty and upset' this summer after threats were made to his family*

PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH/THE GUARDIAN

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The number of felony convictions Donald Trump failed to overturn for falsifying business records

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Female film-makers still being frozen out, says festival director

Nadia Khomami
Arts and culture correspondent

Female film-makers are still being squeezed out of the industry as they progress beyond their debut films, the director of the London film festival (LFF) said yesterday, adding that "the dial does not seem to be moving".

Kristy Matheson's comments came as the LFF announced its full programme for this year's event, which runs from 7 to 19 October. Of the 251 titles, 109 (43%) are made by female film-makers, but only two of the 21 gala films are directed by women.

The figure comes as the Venice film festival faces renewed scrutiny over its lack of female directors in competition. Maggie Gyllenhaal, the president of the Venice jury, said yesterday that there was a "systemic problem" preventing women from getting opportunities, including access to financing.

Speaking about the LFF, Matheson said programmers had no difficulty finding strong films by women at the beginning of their careers but that numbers declined sharply thereafter.

"The statistics are not where you would want them to be," she said. "We have no problem finding incredible films by female directors. We could make a whole Sutherland competition [recognising directorial debut] easily and have only female directors. Then it really drops off.

"So short films, first films, you're just seeing all of this incredible talent. Second films, it starts to drop off. This is not something new. It seems the dial does not seem to be moving."

Matheson said the disparity was particularly visible in the festival's higher-profile sections. "You'll find less female film-makers in the gala section, for example," she said. "How many female directors get to make big-budget films? How many get to make fourth films, fifth films?"

The festival will also feature screen talks with Andrew Scott, Ava DuVernay, Cynthia Erivo, Jesse Eisenberg, John Malkovich, Sofia Coppola, Brad Bird, James Gray, Mahershala Ali, Naomi Ackie and Danny Boyle.

Open and closing this year's festival are films about theatre, creativity and the communities people build around them.

◀ *Julianne Moore in The Debut and, below, Mike Leigh's Tender Loving Care with Kate O'Flynn, Marion Bailey, and Alice Bailey Johnson*

PHOTOGRAPHS: SIMON ACKERMAN/GETTY IMAGES FOR BFI; MATT INFANTE/A24/AP

Simon Stone's Elsinore, receiving its European premiere, will open the festival with the story of the actor Ian Charleson and stars Andrew Scott and Olivia Colman. Jesse Eisenberg's comedy The Debut, a love letter to community theatre, will close it with its UK premiere, starring Julianne Moore and Paul Giamatti.

"To make theatre is to be with others. It's an act of community," Matheson said. "Elsinore and The Debut are very different in tone. But in both you get a sense of what creative community means, and how nourishing and enriching that can be. They're films about people on the precipice of something."

Kristy Matheson, London film festival director

Labour emerged as another theme, Matheson said, with films showing people at work opening up bigger questions about society. Mike Leigh's Tender Loving Care follows two flatmates working in social care, while Boots Riley's I Love Boosters, starring Keke Palmer and Demi Moore, turns a confrontation between shoplifters and a ruthless fashion mogul into a story about unionising.

Other films focus more explicitly on community and "radical care", Matheson said. All of a Sudden, set in a nursing home, uses the relationship between two women to explore friendship and belonging.

Elsewhere, the programme explores political themes. Boyle's Ink, premiering at the Mayor of London's Gala, revisits Rupert Murdoch's acquisition of the Sun and its impact on British politics and western democracy. Martin McDonagh's Wild Horse Nine returns to the eve of Pinochet's 1973 coup in Chile, while Sergei Loznitsa's Imperium reworks footage shot in Russia in the early 1970s into a meditation on empire.

"They're using history to process now," Matheson said.

The Match, a documentary about the 1986 England-Argentina World Cup quarter-final, is structured like a thriller while examining politics, colonialism and ownership. Josephine, which premiered at Sundance, uses thriller conventions to explore trauma after a violent sexual assault witnessed by a young girl. "There are films that are not usually the subject matter of a thriller but are using this genre to explore topics in an engaging and enticing way," Matheson said.

Among the international premieres is Tony Gilroy's Behemoth!, starring Pedro Pascal, Olivia Wilde and Will Arnett and set in the world of classical music. World premieres include Anthony Wonke's British boxing biopic In the Shadows and Michael Winterbottom's The Trip to the Northern Lights, starring Rob Brydon and Steve Coogan.

UK must halt arms sales to Israel, says founder of BDS movement

Patrick Wintour
Diplomatic editor

Britain's legal and ethical obligation to stop a genocide in Gaza requires it to take bigger steps than halting trade with illegal Israeli settlements or imposing further sanctions, Omar Barghouti, the co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, has said.

He described sanctions against individual settler groups or extremist ministers as a "smoke and mirrors cop-out and distraction" from the UK's legal obligation under international law to end all support for Israel, including arms exports, trade deals and academic relations, that "may directly or indirectly enable Israel's illegal occupation" of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, promised on Tuesday to introduce a "comprehensive reset" of the UK's policy on Israel in the coming weeks.

It has been reported that the UK is preparing to ban trade with illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and Miliband told the Commons the government was looking at how to stop British companies "financing, constructing or advertising new settlements".

Miliband has called plans for the E1 settlement, which would involve the construction of 3,400 houses through the heart of the West Bank, unacceptable and destructive, adding that critics say it will render a two-state solution impossible by cutting across the territory.

Tenders for the settlements are due to be handed out, potentially irreversibly, days before the Israeli elections on 27 October.

◀ *Omar Barghouti said sanctions against individual settler groups or extremist ministers were a 'cop-out'*

The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council have claimed that a UK ban on trade with settlements may fuel antisemitism. A third group of British Jews, Yachad, met Miliband to highlight "the growing concerns of many British Jews about the entrenchment of occupation and effective annexation of the West Bank".

Barghouti said the litmus test for human rights law and the west still lay in Palestine. He said: "In July 2024, the international court of justice [ICJ] said Israel's entire occupation of Gaza, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is illegal and amounts to a violation of the racial segregation and apartheid prohibitions under international law.

"Dozens of UN human rights experts have said to fulfil those obligations a set of minimal steps are required: a full military embargo, export import, dual-use transfer and transit. They also said you have to end all trade, diplomatic and economic relations and academic relations that enable Israel's illegal occupation."

The Israeli embassy referred to the warning by Gideon Sa'ar, Israel's foreign minister, who said: "If Britain acts against the state of Israel, the state of Israel will act against Britain."

Defra consults on extending animal welfare to game shoots

Helena Horton

The government is considering a crackdown on pheasant shooting in England as part of a consultation on strict new animal welfare laws that would affect shoot organisers.

Ministers are already considering plans for the issuing of licences for those who run game bird shoots. The proposals mean anybody associated with wildlife crime, such as the poisoning or shooting of birds of prey, would be banned from hosting shooting events.

Every year, thousands of people go to the countryside to shoot pheasants and partridges. Millions of the game birds are released before the shoots. Many are brought over from France as chicks and eggs, and reared by gamekeepers until they are ready to be released for shooting in the autumn. Grouse are wild rather than reared or farmed animals.

While chickens and other farmed birds have to be looked after to minimum animal welfare standards, these do not apply to game birds.

Claire Bass, the director of campaigns at Humane World for Animals UK, said: "The shooting industry breeds millions of birds on an industrial scale, and these animals have fallen through the cracks of animal welfare law. Confined in barren wire cages for most of their lives, birds suffer stress-related injuries and feather loss and are exposed to blazing summer heat and other weather extremes."

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is consulting on changes, and is proposing animal welfare laws to reflect those in place for farmed animals.

Dr Ruth Tingay, a co-director of Wild Justice, said: "Defra needs to stop tinkering around the edges and deal with this head on."

The consultation also seeks to gather evidence covering the effect on wildlife and protected habitats, the spread of disease, animal welfare, wildlife crime and the use of natural resources.

Uber drivers launch European class action over 'soulless' algorithm used to set pay

Robert Booth
UK technology editor

Uber drivers have launched a European class action against the ride-hailing company, claiming that they live in "constant fear" of a "soulless" algorithm it uses to set pay and allocate jobs.

Drivers from the UK, the Netherlands and other countries have joined the compensation claim, which could run into billions of dollars. It alleges a dynamic AI-powered pay-setting system breaches data protection laws and has pushed down their earnings.

The claim has been filed at Amsterdam's district court, where the $150bn (£111bn) San Francisco tech company has its European HQ. It is the first collective legal move of its kind, according to the European Trade Union Confederation.

The case centres on an opaque "black box" algorithm fed on information about drivers, which sets a personalised rate for each ride. Drivers fear it pushes down fares to the minimum they are willing to accept.

They have told the Guardian the algorithm has offered the same job to different people at different pay rates and offers a lower rate for the return journey after a long trip because it calculates they will not want to come home empty.

"It is like someone watching you all the time and knows about your weakness - the boss is the algorithm," said Mohammed Shirwa, a 41-year-old Uber driver in Rotterdam. "All the time the algorithm is learning about you and what you are willing to accept. So the prices go low but you are stuck. It knows you need the job."

Kola Oba, 48, called the algorithm "soulless". He was taking a break in an Asda car park in Tottenham, north London, with another driver and they were both offered the same job.

The other driver was offered £27 and he was offered £23. Because the algorithm is opaque it was not clear why. The pair suspected it was because Oba had taken several cheap jobs and the AI assumed he would accept a lower price. Uber has previously said such discrepancies were down to other features of its system such as GPS, surge pricing, promotions and testing.

"It's scary - they have all my information and they are using it against my own wellbeing," Oba said. "It defines how much I earn, how long I have to work, my time with my family, my resting time."

AI models take an increasing role in assigning work to humans by using their rapidly increasing power to learn about a business's needs and staff behaviour and then acting autonomously as a "synthetic manager".

The Dutch data protection authority fined Uber €825m (£708m) last month for deactivating driver accounts through automated systems without adequate notice. Uber said it would appeal.

The company is also planning to roll out driverless cars in European cities from London to Zagreb, initially with supervision by human drivers.

The latest legal case is being led by the Worker Info Exchange (WIE), a campaign group whose founder, James Farrar, secured a UK supreme court ruling that Uber drivers should have workers' rights.

Relating to about 241,000 drivers across the EU and the UK, it alleges that Uber has unlawfully used automated decision-making, including profiling, in dynamically setting pay and allocating work. The lawsuit, which also claims the company unlawfully used driver data to train its AI models, is seeking damages for affected drivers and an injunction to halt the conduct, which it claims breaches GDPR data regulations.

▲ *Kola Oba, a driver in London, says the algorithm used by Uber is 'scary'*

▲ *Mohammed Shirwa, in Rotterdam, says Uber's algorithm is 'the boss'*

241,000
Number of drivers represented in the collective action, which is being led by the Worker Info Exchange

The drivers claim Uber has operated dynamic pay-setting in the UK since 2023, pushing down their annual incomes by about £5,000. The system was introduced in the Netherlands this year. In 2023, Uber's chief executive, Dara Khosrowshahi, said: "I think that what we can do better is targeting of different trips to different drivers based on their preferences or based on behavioural patterns that they're showing us."

Uber said it did not adjust the price offered for a trip based on an individual driver's behaviour and that a history of accepting or rejecting trips was not used to personalise pay offers. Instead, it said, dynamic pricing allowed it to increase pay on less attractive trips, boosting drivers' earning potential.

"We categorically reject WIE's allegations," an Uber spokesperson said.

Farrar said: "The intrusive and underhanded way in which Uber uses its technology to monitor and influence drivers' behaviour is an affront to their dignity."

Anton Ekker, a Dutch lawyer leading the case, said: "Like so many other online platforms, it should be held accountable for the large-scale exploitation of vulnerabilities of European citizens."

London's first robotaxis for hire as ride-hailing app adds Wayve cars

Gwyn Topham
Transport correspondent

Londoners will be able to hire self-driving taxis for the first time after Wayve's autonomous vehicles (AVs) are added to the Uber app today.

The chances of landing a robotaxi on request are slim, with only 15 vehicles licensed so far. That contrasts with the more than 100,000 private hire vehicles in the capital - roughly the same number of Uber customers who have registered to hire autonomous vehicles.

The cars will still come with a licensed human driver sitting in the front seat, ready to take over the controls should the need arise.

Transport for London (TfL) last month licensed Uber and the UK tech company Wayve's modified Ford Mustang cars as private hire vehicles, with conditions requiring supervision by a safety driver.

Regulatory approval for vehicles in fully autonomous operations must be issued by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, and is now seen as unlikely to be granted this year. Nonetheless, today's launch marks a significant milestone and has allowed Uber to steal a march in the race by tech companies to bring driverless taxis into London, seen as a crucial market for a wider European rollout. The Google-owned Waymo and the Chinese firm Baidu are currently testing robotaxis in the capital.

▲ *Wayve's autonomous vehicles will be available to book via the Uber app from today but will also carry a human driver* PHOTOGRAPH: WAYVE

Alex Kendall, the boss of Wayve, said he was proud to introduce the company's AI driver technology to the public for the first time in London, "one of the most complex driving environments in the world".

He said the technology was "still maturing" but robotaxi services without a safety driver would come, though he declined to predict when. "I don't want to put a timeline on it, but we're pushing as fast as we can," Kendall said.

He said Wayve would be moving to "scalable, manufacturer-produced vehicles" - new Nissan Leaf robotaxis with its technology - and needed to "validate the safety metrics on that platform", as well as secure regulatory approval.

"We're working on all three in parallel. As soon as they come together, we'll launch [fully] driverless services," he added.

Wayve's self-driving technology is based on an AI learning model rather than the mapping used by rivals such as Waymo.

On a brief autonomous test drive with the Guardian in Westminster this week, all passed smoothly, with Kendall notably pleased by the car deciding to pull away again and repark after stopping in front of gates that other cars were attempting to pass through. "That was quite human-like - really cool," he said. "We've done a lot of work to make sure the car can park in appropriate spots that are socially acceptable."

The cars will be hailed and unlocked through the Uber app. A human driver will introduce themselves with an appropriately robotic script, explaining that they will not speak during the ride but can be requested to take over control of the vehicle if the customer prefers.

While they will be the first self-driving cabs for hire in London, fully driverless services are in operation in many cities worldwide, primarily in the US and China, as well as the United Arab Emirates.

Sarfraz Maredia, the head of autonomous mobility at Uber, said the London launch was "a major milestone in scaling safe, accessible AV technology in a city with some of the world's most complex roads".

He added: "The benefit for consumers should be, over time, that it's both safer and cheaper.

"Today, nobody's able to operate AVs cheaper than a traditional human-driven ride, so that's going to take a while to prove."

Maredia said Uber had heard concerns from drivers but said he believed they would not be put out of work. "One of the most common ones we hear from our drivers is: 'I don't think this is going to be able to compete with me any time soon.'"

He added: "We always want Uber to be a platform where both human drivers and AVs can operate, and because the market and our business are still growing here we think that's going to be true for a long time."

Couple separated by Swedish post-Brexit policy say system is 'crushing families'

▲ *John and Caroline Sellers have gone public to raise awareness of their plight; below, the newly married couple* PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN SELLERS

> ***'Whenever I come to England I feel like a tourist. Sweden is my home. It's horrible ... I've been ripped from the love of my life'***
>
> **John Sellers**

Lisa O'Carroll
Senior correspondent

A 34-year-old British man who has lived in Sweden since he was 10 has been deported in the latest Brexit-induced catastrophe for UK citizens in the country.

John Sellers had lived in Sweden for 24 years and was newly married to his Swedish partner, Caroline. "It is time people know how people are being treated here, and it is time to show what Brexit has caused," he said, as he described his near seven-year struggle to remain in the country.

"I am very well aware that different countries have different rules on immigration, but none of this would have happened were it not for Brexit."

His parents moved to Sweden from Essex under the free movement rights that came with the UK's membership of the EU because they liked the education system and thought it was a "good place to bring up children".

His father died when he was 16, and his mother moved back to England after he started a college course to become a teacher. Sellers was deported in January after three failed attempts to remain and is still fighting to return to Gothenburg, where he is hoping to build a family with his wife.

"Whenever I come to England, I feel like a tourist. Sweden is my home," he said.

"It is horrible. Not only do I feel like I've let down Caroline, I've let down my family, let down myself. I've been ripped from the love of my life ... I wish people wouldn't have to go through this kind of pain, because you're not whole - you're broken."

Hit with the cost of fighting deportation, and a lack of work because of the forced move, Sellers said he did not know how long it would be before he could be reunited with his wife.

Caroline, who has chronic conditions including fibromyalgia and symptoms of long Covid, such as chronic fatigue, is trying to get back on her feet to return to teaching.

She said: "It's just horrible - the feeling of finally having someone to help you with things, someone to lean on and someone who is always there for you, and then having to spend so much time, effort and money on fighting the government just to be able to continue that relationship.

"We just want to spend our lives together, and it's so hard having to fight for that, especially when I am not well to begin with."

Sweden's migration minister, Johan Forssell, is poised to respond to the MP Håkan Svenneling's demand for a review of the approach to British residents in the country post-Brexit. Svenneling intervened last month after it emerged that one of his constituents, 78-year-old widow Joyce Thomas, who has been in the country for 21 years, had been told to leave.

Thomas has until 7 September to leave, but her friends and supporters are pleading with Forssell to freeze removals and review a policy that critics have said is not consistent with the Brexit withdrawal agreement.

Another elderly British citizen, George Mason, who is in full-time dementia care, was told to leave in August but won a stay of execution until 28 September while migration officials consider the "obstacles to enforcement", his son said.

The Guardian is aware of another British man detained by police this week and told he will be deported.

Caroline Sellers said the couple had decided to go to the media because it was important for politicians and officials in Brussels to see how Sweden's interpretation of Brexit was "crushing people, crushing families" rather than protecting them, as politicians promised.

Eurostat data shows Sweden has the highest number of all EU members of Brexit-related deportations of Britons. About 2,500 British nationals have been ordered to leave since Brexit, one-third of the entire number of removal orders issued across the 27-member bloc since Brexit in 2021.

The problem centres on the migration agency's apparent refusal to allow late applications from people who were not aware they had to formally apply to remain. The Foreign Office has expressed concern about Sweden's approach to late applications. It is understood that senior officials at the European Commission are watching with interest.

David Milstead, an activist with the Brits in Sweden group, wrote in the Guardian last month that complaints about the Swedish approach were first made years ago. Part of the problem, he said, stemmed from the lack of communication to Britons registered as living in the country, causing the missed deadlines.

He said the Sellers' case was "yet another example of systemic failings in Sweden's implementation of the withdrawal agreement".

He added: "There are welcome signs that the Swedish government is taking these problems more seriously, although it is too early to know what will follow. Any remedial action needs to come soon, because people are suffering now."

Sellers knew Brexit could affect his right to stay and, without any communication from the authorities, he thought his best option was to apply for Swedish citizenship. This he did in September 2021, before the Brexit deadline of 31 December that year. Not only was his citizenship rejected, but two later attempts to remain under family rights in national migration laws via his partner, now his wife, were also turned down.

The latest adjudication was that they had "not lived together abroad for an extended period of time". The migration court had noted that other evidence of a durable relationship was "insufficient". The Sellers are now appealing for a review of the judgment with fresh evidence.

Stockholm

Government doubles down on policy of deporting UK citizens

Lisa O'Carroll

The Swedish government has doubled down on its policy of removing and deporting British citizens who were late to apply for permission to stay after Brexit.

The migration minister, Johan Forssell, issued a robust defence of the Swedish Migration Agency's implementation of the Brexit withdrawal agreement yesterday in response to a question from an MP about the case of Joyce Thomas, a 78-year-old British widow who has been ordered to leave the country after 21 years.

Forssell said the European Commission, which is legally mandated to ensure EU member states implement the withdrawal agreement correctly, accepted Sweden's approach.

"The migration board has followed up on the application of the withdrawal agreement and the assessment is that Sweden has fulfilled its commitments. This assessment is shared by the commission," he said.

There has been growing controversy over removal orders issued to British citizens who did not know that Sweden was one of 13 countries in the EU that required formal applications to stay in the country post-Brexit.

In the latest case, a 34-year-old British man, John Sellers, has been deported despite having lived in Sweden since he was 10.

Thomas's local MP, Håkan Svenneling, of the Left party, said: "It seems that the Swedish government thinks everything is fine even though British citizens are being deported from Sweden right now. Not acting is also an action in this situation. What Sweden needs is a new government and a new migration minister who stops deporting people with strong connections to Sweden."

In his written answer to Svenneling, Forssell offered British citizens facing deportation a sliver of hope. He said: "The relationship with the UK is very important to Sweden and the government will continue to safeguard the correct implementation of the withdrawal agreement. As part of this, the government is investigating whether further measures can be taken to facilitate the process."

Thomas has been told she must remove herself by Tuesday or face deportation and a potential ban from the Schengen area. She is one of several Britons faced with removal orders after their late applications to stay were rejected.

The Foreign Office has raised Sweden's approach to late applications for post-Brexit residency a number of times in the specialised committee on citizens' rights, a structure set up to ensure the withdrawal agreement is implemented properly.

David Milstead, who runs the grassroots organisation Brits in Sweden, said that under the agreement, the UK was obliged to set up a statutory body, the Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA), to ensure the Home Office implemented the Brexit deal correctly, while the European Commission performed the role for EU member states.

"The IMA has taken a more robust approach. It is hard to imagine it not challenging the UK had it operated a policy like Sweden's," Milstead said. "Sweden's approach needs to be tested before the European court of justice or addressed through measures that remedy the problem."

The European Commission was approached for comment.

▲ *Joyce Thomas, 78, has been told to leave after 21 years in Sweden; left, Johan Forssell, the migration minister*

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Public to watch the uncovering of secrets behind portrait of Thomas More's family

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

A spectacular, internationally important painting of Thomas More and his family will have its secrets explored as the public look on.

The open heritage science project, which begins today, is a UK first and will deploy techniques used at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam during its public restoration of Rembrandt's masterpiece The Night Watch.

The National Trust said visitors to Nostell, a Palladian mansion near Wakefield in West Yorkshire, would be able to watch cutting-edge research usually undertaken in labs.

Simon McCormack, Nostell's curator, said the team wanted to take the public on a deep dive into the prized painting. "Why are we doing all these things behind the scenes when we are looking after and caring for heritage which ultimately belongs to everybody?" he said.

The work is considered "one of the glories" of the National Trust's collections and shows three generations of the family. More, Henry VIII's lord chancellor, was executed in 1535 for not supporting the annulment of the king's marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

McCormack said seeing the painting in person was quite something. "It's life-size and it is that trompe-l'oeil effect where you might feel you're almost walking into the painting. It's very visceral, very realistic."

The work is regarded as the only faithful, life-size copy of the original painting by Holbein, which was destroyed in a fire in 1752.

Holbein, considered 16th-century England's most important artist, met More through their mutual friend Erasmus. More commissioned him to paint his family, resulting in a portrait that was "arguably the greatest and most innovative work of Holbein's English period" and "at least a century ahead of its time", according to the art historian Roy Strong.

McCormack said the Holbein painting was "arguably the first family portrait in a domestic setting in British art history".

There are five known copies of the Holbein, including one in the National Portrait Gallery and a miniature in the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection.

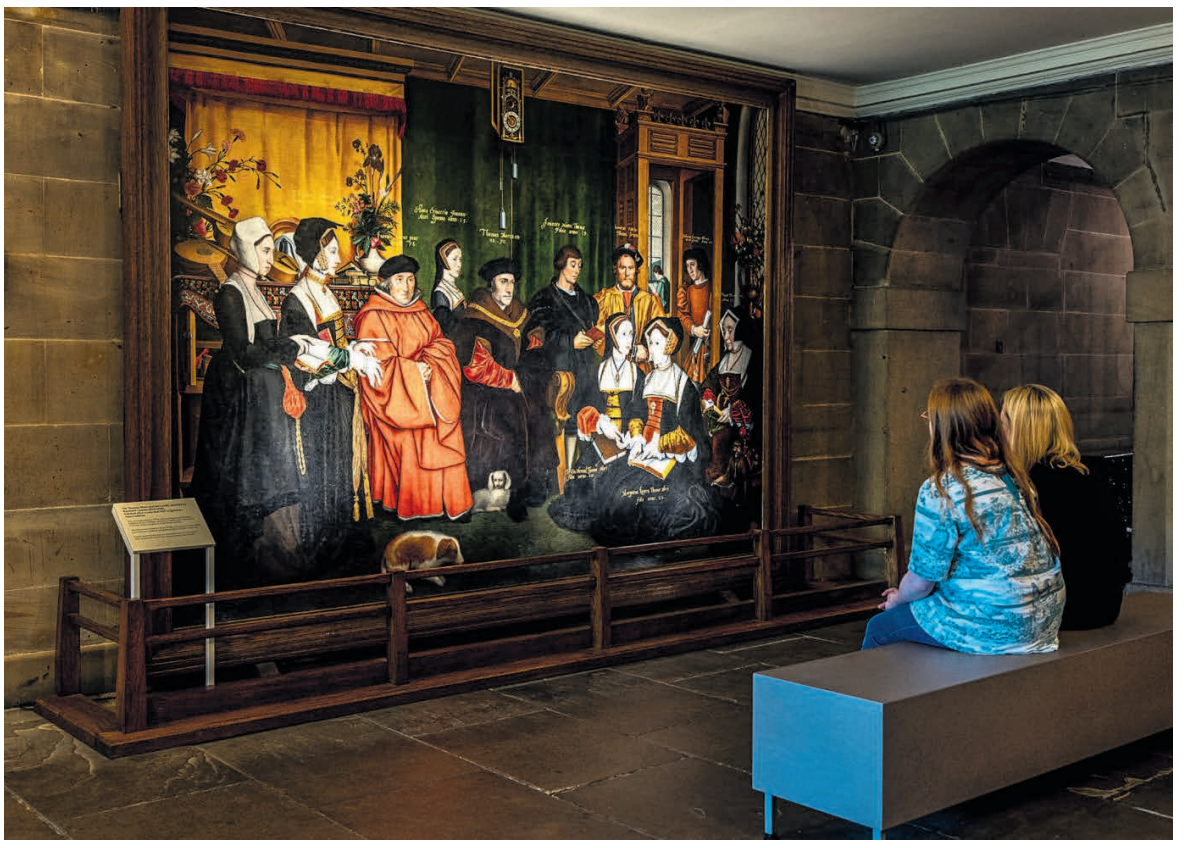
It depicts More with his family, pets, books and musical instruments in their home in Chelsea, London. As with many Tudor-era paintings, it is filled with symbolism and hidden meanings.

A tethered monkey next to More's second wife, Alice, has been seen as representing her ability to control the household. More was thought to have owned a pet monkey.

The many books reference the family's scholarly reputation and the three-petalled irises allude to faith, valour and wisdom.

The on-site research, expected to last eight days, is being carried out by the Fitzwilliam Museum's Hamilton Kerr Institute. It will be the first time that macro X-ray fluorescence scanning has been done in public in the UK. Researchers are hoping to uncover any hidden under-drawing and later additions to the painting.

Erma Hermens, the institute's director, said: "We are very excited to use our technical equipment in situ for the first time to help the National Trust in their understanding of this amazing family portrait."



▲ *The work, said to be filled with symbolism and hidden meanings, shows More with his family, pets, books and musical instruments at their home in Chelsea, London*

PHOTOGRAPH: ANNAPURNA MELLOR/ NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES

Theatre review Trapped-in-a-lift comedy leaves audience roaring

Ready tae Drap
Òran Mór, Glasgow
★★★☆☆

Katie Hawthorne

Trapping three nightmare neighbours in the dodgy lift of their Glasgow high-rise, Ready tae Drap has lots of sparky, slapstick humour – but not so much nuance. Crotchety conspiracy theorist Pat (Isabelle Joss) is in her 70s and armed with barbed, uninvited observations. Saintly, exhausted Muslim mother-of-two Aaliyah (Tinashe Warikandwa) is on the verge of giving birth to her third child. Dry-humoured Lauren (performed by the playwright, Éimi Quinn) is the play's millennial, fourth-wall-breaking narrator, clad in fishnets and bunny ears for a hen-do. It's a classic setup: can these contrasting characters find common ground in a tight spot?

Not really. Quinn's vivid play digs into chalk-and-cheese humour and an ever-present threat of body fluids, cracking jokes as blue as Lauren's favourite flavour of WKD.

Within the lift's cramped confines (with concise design from Heather Grace Currie), Maureen Carr's direction is dynamic and physical, bringing out the cast's comedic chemistry: Pat's gleeful descriptions of her post-menopausal sex life leave Aaliyah and Lauren wide-eyed and the Òran Mór's full house roaring.

But all this (literal, enjoyable) pissing about disguises the crux of the matter. For most of the hour, the older woman's racism is watered down – although one sharply written line about Glasgow's city centre fires has the audience nodding in agreement before it slides into blatant xenophobia. When Pat eventually tears off a vicious tirade against migrants, directed at Aaliyah whom she "doesn't mean to offend", both characters feel caricatured and underwritten. Even then, Pat's lonely backstory is richer than Aaliyah's, who is given a detail-free story about moving to Glasgow as a refugee – and all the while, Lauren, the audience's direct contact, has fallen asleep in the corner.

When she wakes, her own emotional reckoning is just as thin: Aaliyah and Pat team up to demand why "selfish" Lauren doesn't want kids, and she skims over a vague answer in less time than the trio spent poking fun at hen-do inflatables.

Ready tae Drap wisely doesn't pretend that small talk will fix society's deepening trenches. But despite its sleeves-rolled-up approach to life's grubbier stuff, it shrinks away from emotional viscera.

Until 5 September

◀ *From left, neighbours Aaliyah (Tinashe Warikandwa), Lauren (Éimi Quinn) and Pat (Isabelle Joss) feel the squeeze in Ready tae Drap*

PHOTOGRAPH: EOIN CAREY

Gun found in French lake is examined for links to 2012 Alps killings

Patrick Daly

Experts are examining a gun found by tourists to determine whether it might have been used to kill a British family in the French Alps 14 years ago.

In a murder case that remains unsolved, Saad al-Hilli, 50, his wife, Iqbal, 47, and her mother, Suhaila al-Allaf, 74, were shot dead on a road near Annecy, a remote Alpine village in eastern France, in September 2012.

The couple's two young daughters, then four and seven, survived but a passing cyclist, 45-year-old Sylvain Mollier, was also killed.

The French prosecutor Marie-Céline Lawrysz confirmed that a pistol, thought to be a Luger, was uncovered on 20 August by two tourists swimming in Lake Annecy. The weapon is being analysed by ballistic experts in France in connection with the al-Hilli cold case.

During the initial investigation, pieces from the butt of the weapon used in the killings, a vintage Luger P06/29 pistol, were found on the ground near the British-registered BMW estate car that the family had been driving at the time of the attack. The gun was identified as a model used by the Swiss army in the 1930s, but its owner has never been traced.

In a statement, Lawrysz said a semi-automatic pistol had been found by the tourists, reported to be British, at a depth of about five feet, a few dozen metres away from the shore of Lake Annecy.

She said: "They kept the weapon for 24 hours and conducted online research to identify its type.

"They subsequently drew a link between the discovered weapon and the one believed to have been used in the 2012 killing.

"On 21 August, they handed the weapon over to gendarmes from the local St-Jorioz brigade."

Detectives have so far ruled out the possibility of a contract killing, saying a professional killer would not have used a vintage weapon.

The discovery of the pistol is the latest in a long line of leads that investigators have followed in the mystery that has surrounded the four deaths.

Call to ban 'profiteering' in child social care as private equity expands

Jessica Murray
Social affairs correspondent

Private equity companies now own or partly own 11 of the 20 largest providers of fostering and children's homes in England, amid growing calls for "obscene" profit-making in children's care to be banned.

An investigation by the thinktank Common Wealth found the "big four" independent fostering agencies – which provide almost a quarter of fostering placements in England – had paid out more than £200m from taxpayers to shareholders in interest payments since 2020.

Andrea Egan, the general secretary of Unison, said the findings must be a "wake-up call" for systemic change in children's social care.

"Profiteering from children's social care is nothing short of obscene," she said. "Decades of outsourcing mean essential services funded by taxpayers are being treated as a goldmine by investors.

"They're using the welfare of vulnerable children to line their pockets. Children's social care needs fundamental change, and it needs it soon."

The analysis found that at least one in three fostering agency placements and one in five children's homes placements are run by firms backed by institutional finance, including private equity, hedge funds, venture capital and sovereign wealth funds.

It also found that the four largest fostering companies all used shareholder loans, under which shareholders lend money to a business (without buying new shares) at interest rates that are typically much higher than bank rates.

Through this method, the companies have paid or reserved at least £205m to their shareholders and investors since 2020.

National Fostering Group, the largest independent fostering provider in the UK, with more than 4,000 places, is owned by Stirling Square Capital Partners, having previously passed through the hands of Graphite Capital and Sovereign Capital.

It has paid more than £116m in interest on investor loans since 2020, Common Wealth found, as well as £71m in interest on preference shares (where a pre-agreed percentage of an investment is paid back to the investor over a fixed period).

BSN Social Care, majority-owned by MML Capital Partners, runs a chain of regional fostering agencies supporting more than 850 children. It has paid more than £7m in interest on shareholder loans since 2020.

Reported interest rates on these loans range from 8% to 14%. The thinktank said this creates a tax shield by artificially depressing taxable profits, and is a "mechanism for extracting wealth for investors".

Sophie Flinders, a senior data analyst at Common Wealth who led the analysis, said there was a clear case to ban private companies from profiting from public and essential services. "It's time to … ensure that all spending on children's social care goes directly to improving the quality of care, not to lining shareholders' pockets," she said.

Egan added that returning services to the public sector would "ensure funding goes where it's needed and there's genuine accountability".

A Guardian investigation found that £1 in every £11 of UK government spending on contractors went to private equity-controlled companies last year.

The UK government has vowed to curb profiteering in children's social care through better oversight and, as a last resort, the capping of profits. The Welsh government has promised to end for-profit provision in children's social care by 2030.

Common Wealth is calling for a temporary pause on for-profit providers in children's social care and a full audit of illegal children's homes.

National Fostering Group said every pound it received was "focused on frontline care". BSN Social Care was contacted for comment.

£200m
Amount in taxpayer funds paid by the 'big four' independent groups to shareholders in interest since 2020

4,000
Number of fostering places provided by National Fostering Group, the UK's largest independent provider

Film review Boyle turns birth of the Sun into gleefully lurid tabloid frenzy

Ink
★★★☆☆

Peter Bradshaw

Danny Boyle presents us with a lurid, violent and thumpingly unsubtle movie full of Dutch angles, cartoony shocks and gargoyle closeups.

It's a chapter in the prehistory of modern media, adapted by James Graham from his 2017 stage play, filled with shame and fear and self-hate. It is in fact the story of the Sun newspaper, and how Rupert Murdoch (Guy Pearce) bought the ailing minor title in the late 60s and hired a tough Yorkshire newspaperman, Larry Lamb, to turn it into a raucous and gleefully vulgar circulation powerhouse.

Ink summons up the energy and frenzy of tabloid papers of the era, but also – and not entirely intentionally – how strangely depressing they were. Audiences used to the super-rich anomie of the Roy family from TV's Succession might find all this very unsexy. This is a world of officer-class Fleet Street execs having expense-account meals at Rules and the Savoy Grill in pinstripe suits, smoking and drinking and impassively writing salary offers on paper napkins and silently passing them across to each other. Meanwhile, the other ranks of journalists and print unions are covered in sweat and ink.

Murdoch and Lamb had something to prove: both wanted to take a slap at the establishment club that had until that moment kept them out. Jack O'Connell is excellent casting as Lamb; muscular and pugnacious as a working-class reporter made good.

▲ *Jack O'Connell as Larry Lamb, hired by Rupert Murdoch (Guy Pearce), left, to run and radically reinvent his newly purchased Sun newspaper*

PHOTOGRAPHS: STUDIOCANAL; ANTHONY DICKENSON/NETFLIX/AP

Pearce is less of a panto monster than you might expect; in fact, he is increasingly squeamish and fastidious at the rude ideas that Lamb keeps coming up with for the paper – even if the Page 3 girls were not immediately introduced. It's a coolly composed performance, though the traditional question of what makes Murdoch tick is incuriously passed over; again, this suffers in comparison with Brian Cox's Logan Roy in Succession.

Claire Foy plays the fictional-composite figure of Jules, a kind of young Marjorie Proops women's page editor powerless to stop the coming tide of sexism.

Yet this is a film with a story-within-a-story to tell, about a truly horrifying true-crime nightmare (in this way, oddly reminiscent of Akira Kurosawa's 1963 film High and Low) which perhaps deserves a film of its own. In 1969, Muriel McKay (played here by Lucy Russell), the wife of the Murdoch executive Alick McKay (Jonathan Hyde), was kidnapped by people who thought she was Murdoch's wife Anna. It was a chaotic and incompetent abduction that resulted in the death of Muriel, whose body was never found.

The film is perhaps unsure exactly how much prominence to give this horrible affair in the midst of the bleary, knowing and lenient black comedy that governs everything else. Was the McKay kidnapping a terrible karmic judgment on the Murdoch group and the Sun itself, that did so much to promote materialism and celebrity obsession? (The kidnappers were reputedly inspired by Murdoch's appearance on TV.)

Maybe. Boyle's movie imagines Lamb unrepentantly running sensational stories about the kidnapping – as he never would have dared if the victim was actually Anna Murdoch – on the grounds that a reader might have important information to give the police. And then, after the tragic outcome becomes clear, he rejects guilt and doubles down on Sun-sationalism and introduces Page 3 girls.

So was the McKay kidnapping the primal scene of media degradation, the seed that led to Fox News, Trumpism and the social media manosphere? Again, maybe; but perhaps the kidnapping should occupy a more central dramatic position if the film is not to appear cynical and detached in the way that the Sun was accused of being. Either way, it's a resoundingly tough and confident performance from O'Connell.

In cinemas from 8 January

George Clooney Star defends Ruffalo in studio merger row

Nadia Khomami
Arts and culture correspondent

George Clooney has defended Mark Ruffalo's right to criticise the proposed $111bn (£82bn) Paramount takeover of Warner Bros Discovery, saying he is concerned about the consequences of further consolidation in Hollywood.

Speaking in Venice ahead of receiving the festival's Golden Lion for lifetime achievement, Clooney said he supported Ruffalo's "ability to speak freely" about the proposed merger, while expressing his own doubts about the deal.

"I worry when a big company swallows up another company," Clooney said. "I always worry whenever big companies are consolidating because it means a lot of people are going to lose their jobs."

Ruffalo has emerged as one of the most outspoken opponents of the Paramount-Warner Bros deal. In a social media post last month, the Marvel star attacked the proposed merger over its potential consequences for Hollywood, while also turning his criticism on the family behind Paramount. David Ellison, the company's chief executive, is the son of the Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison, and Ruffalo accused the Ellison family of being complicit in the genocide of Palestinians, arguing that it was "built on an apartheid system of oppression powered by Oracle".

Ruffalo highlighted Oracle's ties to the Israeli military, sharing a video of the company's executive vice-chair and Paramount board member Safra Catz discussing technologies Oracle had used after the 7 October Hamas attack on Israel. His comments prompted a backlash from Paramount, which accused him of invoking antisemitic tropes.

Ruffalo rejected the accusation and has continued to defend his criticism of the deal and of Oracle's business ties to Israel. More than 170 Jewish artists, academics and public figures signed an open letter defending the actor and warning against attempts to silence criticism of Israel or the proposed merger.

"I support Mark Ruffalo's ability to speak freely," Clooney said. "I believe in free speech even when I completely disagree with it. That's important, right? In fact, it's part of how a democracy works.

"There are going to be people tonight in the room that are going to disagree with most everything I say or stand for. Fair enough. That's how it's supposed to be. We're supposed to argue these things out and come to a conclusion based on the information that we take in … I will always support Mark Ruffalo's ability to speak freely. I like him. He's a good man."

Clooney said he did not believe the Paramount-Warner deal necessarily made financial sense. "I don't know how this goes through. There are so many issues involved," he said.

Clooney also warned that artificial intelligence would become "a very big part of this industry" but would "hurt us in a lot of ways". He joked: "I would like to avoid being in a tampon commercial 20 years after I'm dead."

▲ *Clooney received the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement yesterday*

The Trump critic said the US midterm elections in November "should be a check and balance", adding that in 2028 "with any luck, we'll have some restoration into normalcy".

He also raised concerns about the concentration of media ownership among the world's wealthiest people. Asked about the state of journalism, he pointed to the Amazon founder, Jeff Bezos, who owns the Washington Post, and Elon Musk, the owner of X.

Clooney accepted the lifetime achievement award yesterday evening. It is a striking case of life imitating art: last year, he attended the festival for Noah Baumbach's Jay Kelly, in which he played an ageing Hollywood star travelling to Italy to receive a lifetime achievement honour.

The honour caps a relationship with the Venice festival stretching back almost three decades.

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News
Climate crisis

Global heating will reach at least 1.8C and there are 'no good outcomes' – UN

Fossil fuels are a major cause of global heating

Adam Morton

Global heating will reach at least 1.8C under even the most optimistic future, well beyond the Paris agreement goal of 1.5C, according to a UN report. It warned that every fraction of temperature rise intensified extreme weather, glacier melt, ecosystem loss and island and coastal city submersion.

The report by the UN Environment Programme (Unep), based in Nairobi, confirmed overshooting the 1.5C goal inscribed in the agreement of 2015 was now "unavoidable" and, despite some progress in addressing the human-caused climate crisis driven by burning fossil fuels, probably in the next few years. It said: "There are no good outcomes above 1.5C."

Heating of up to 3C above pre-industrial levels could lead to glaciers losing more than a quarter of their mass by 2100, raising sea levels by up to 13cm (5in). Global food production could decline by up to 14% by 2050 if there were not strategies to adapt.

Health, water supplies, nature, cities, infrastructure and economies could all be severely damaged. Some losses would be irreversible. Many communities could have to relocate or change their livelihoods.

The report said the best hope for humanity to limit damage was to adopt an "overshoot, peak and decline" pathway, combining immediate and sustained greenhouse gas emissions cuts with steps to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

It described the goal of net zero emissions – increasingly politically contentious in some countries – as "an essential milestone that cannot be skipped" and said carbon dioxide removal through steps such as planting vast forests must occur alongside deep cuts in fossil fuel pollution.

▲ *Clouds of smoke from a wildfire fill the sky above Moutchic beach in Lacanau, south-west France, in July*
PHOTOGRAPH: MAXIMILIEN LAMY/AFP/GETTY

The authors of the report, titled Limiting Overshoot, said the average global temperature rise could be returned to 1.5C this century only if heating stayed below about 1.8C. They said nature's capacity to store carbon was uncertain and would shrink as the planet heated.

Surangel Whipps Jr, the president of Palau – who is this week hosting regional leaders including Australia's Anthony Albanese for a Pacific Islands Forum on security and climate – said the report was "a fork in the road moment for the planet".

He added: "It is hard to overstate the depth of emotion for those of us living on the frontline after having fought so hard to put the 1.5C limit at the heart of the Paris agreement.

"We need to see an urgent and unprecedented increase in political will and investment in a climate safe future. Nobody can read this report and conclude otherwise."

Vishal Prasad, from Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, said: "The international court of justice has made it clear: keeping to 1.5C is not a choice, it is a legal obligation. We are not asking for your goodwill. We are not begging you. We are telling you what international law requires of you. End fossil fuel expansion. Your corporate profits cannot be allowed to extinguish our future."

Inger Andersen, Unep's executive director, said extreme heatwaves – such as those that exacerbated wildfires and droughts this summer – had shown climate impacts would "strike faster, hit harder and last longer".

She said: "We have to act with urgency and determination. Every fraction of a degree avoided, every year by which overshoot is shortened and every adaptation action taken will save lives, protect ecosystems and reduce economic losses."

Prof Debra Roberts, a report author and co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, said a central message was that "the rules of the game are now changing".

She said: "Existing approaches are no longer fit for purpose. I think, for me, that's the clarion call. We now have to reconfigure our climate governance around dealing with an overshoot pathway."

She said that meant pollution cuts and carbon removal, and "bold adaptation" to protect livelihoods, sustain political and social support for reducing emissions and prevent resources being diverted to crisis response.

The report's authors said earlier work had found that limiting heating to about 1.8C required global emissions to be halved by 2035. They said existing national policies were projected to lead to at least 2.3C heating, but it would be possible to stay below 2C if countries delivered on net zero emissions commitments by the middle of the century.

'Darwinism', 'snowflakery' and a 'scam'
How GB News and Talk TV lost their cool

As the first heatwave of the record-breaking summer arrived on 23 May, the GB News host Cristo Foufas was not happy: "I am sick to death of the naysayers saying that we're all going to die and that we have to put out heat alerts. Just drink some water and drink a bit less rosé in the sunshine."

"We used to call it Darwinism," replied his co-host Renée Hoenderkamp, a medical doctor.

The arrival of the intense heatwave in late June – the most extreme ever recorded in Europe – didn't change the tone. "People die each year from vending machines falling on them, and coconuts hitting their heads. People die, unfortunately, that's a reality of life, and things get hot," said Will Kingston, a presenter and contributor on GB News, a free-to-air television channel. "It doesn't mean you have to change your life in ways big and small to accommodate for it."

Over on Talk TV, a streaming news channel, there was also little empathy as the country sweltered in deadly heat. "I'm very sorry if someone dies because of the heat, but I don't think that's a reason for us never to be allowed to take a flight again, or stop being allowed to eat meat," said the presenter Julia Hartley-Brewer on 24 June, citing policies no one is putting in place. Her guest, the conservative commentator Benedict Spence, agreed, saying: "One way or another, something's going to get you."

As the June heatwave reached its peak, the Talk TV host Kevin O'Sullivan was getting hot under the collar about the "asinine snowflakery" of climate concern: "Our hysterical hysteria over climate change because we've had a few nice days … It's a nice day. Now we call it a death risk."

Then the numbers came in. The May and June heatwaves had killed about 2,700 people prematurely, according to an analysis based on the relationship established between heat and mortality in previous data, published on 13 July.

Cue a meltdown from O'Sullivan: "No such thing happened. They've sort of qualified it – said 2,700 people might have died – and this has been apparently gamed by computer programmes." The report was "just disgraceful climate change scaremongering" and "absolute poppycock", he said.

On GB News, the presenter Will Kingston was also deeply unimpressed: "If there is one thing that Covid taught us, it is that modelling is effectively guesswork from clever-sounding people with an ideological agenda."

These hot takes did not age well. On 30 July, the UK Health Security Agency announced that 2,877 people more than usual had indeed died in the May and June heatwaves, using data on actual recorded deaths.

Many heat-related deaths are among elderly and unwell people, apparently making their premature demise seem less important for some contributors, such as Ross Clark, who had told Talk TV on 25 June that they were "perhaps on the point of dying anyway".

Presenters and guests on both channels frequently pointed to the higher level of deaths from cold in winter. None were asked why any reduction in winter deaths due to global heating would mean the rising number of heat deaths in summer was acceptable.

And it's not even true any more: the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show 2,805 heat-related deaths in England and Wales in 2025 compared with 2,244 cold-related deaths.

You might think it would be hard to deny the basic reality of global heating as the temperatures soared outside. You'd be wrong.

▲ *Kevin O'Sullivan called a report on heat-related deaths 'poppycock'*

There was straightforward denial on GB News with, for example, the presenter Nana Akua calling the climate crisis a "scam" as the hottest May ever recorded ended, and Hoenderkamp blaming the sun, an ancient climate myth.

On Talk TV, Hartley-Brewer blithely told viewers in late June: "We've always had freak weather." Not like this we haven't, according to hundreds of scientific studies.

The research on the two channels was conducted for the Guardian by Stop Funding Heat, which used a combination of manual and AI-assisted research to monitor broadcasts. Each instance was then checked by a researcher and a Guardian reporter.

The world's climate scientists, in reports signed off by 192 national governments, have been clear for more than a decade that 100% of global heating since 1950 was caused by human emissions and activities. Every heatwave is being made more intense and more likely as a result of fossil fuel burning and rising global heat kills one person a minute around the world, according to a major recent report in The Lancet. **Damian Carrington**

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Lucy Robinson says her request for care to attend a conference in Germany for her work was rejected
PHOTOGRAPH: ALICIA CANTER/THE GUARDIAN

'I want to live': the disabled care users blocked from travel abroad

Frances Ryan
Patrick Butler

Disabled people are being blocked from travelling abroad by NHS care boards and local councils that refuse to let them use their care funding outside the UK, the Guardian has learned.

Campaigners warn of a "postcode lottery" in England where the right of a disabled person to travel overseas depends on where they live or the whim of local officials - even when there is no extra cost to the taxpayer.

Disabled care users report having to abandon travel plans at the last minute, or go for years without a break, when authorities refuse to pay for their care abroad, even though they have agreed to meet all the travel expenses.

In some instances, individuals have had requests for care and support for overseas travel turned down by NHS officials - only to have the decision reversed when they threatened legal action.

Lucy Robinson, 38, said she had been prevented from attending international work events and going on a holiday because health officials in Oxfordshire had refused to allow her to use her care package abroad.

Robinson, who is quadriplegic and has a team of 24-hour personal assistants, is often required to travel in her role as president of the European Spinal Cord Injury Federation (ESCIF). She has received NHS support for some trips.

She said the experience had caused huge stress: "Travel is one of the things that defines my life, in terms of most of the work I do, but also because I like travelling. My quality of life is based around that. I want to live, not just to exist."

The cases have led to calls for national guidance amid concerns there are no clear or consistent NHS or council-wide rules clarifying the right of disabled people to take their carers abroad. Their care packages typically provide them with personal assistants for help with dressing, movement and night support.

Campaigners have emphasised this is not about "holidays on the NHS". There is no extra cost for the health service or local authorities, which are already paying for the care. In almost all cases, the care recipient is expected to pay for their assistant's expenses and arrange their insurance.

"Refusing to pay for care and support abroad does not deliver any financial savings for the taxpayer," said Carol Barraclough, advocacy and support manager at the Spinal Injuries Association. "We'd like to see national guidance on this that is effective and clear on the rights of all disabled people to take their carers outside the UK."

Robinson said the Thames Valley NHS integrated care board (ICB) told her in April it had rejected her care request to attend a conference in Germany because "NHS funding responsibilities cease at the UK border".

As a result, she was forced to abandon planned work events in Norway and Albania. She was able to go to Germany only because her mother stepped in as her 24/7 carer.

> ***'Travel is one of the things that defines my life, in terms of the work I do, but also because I like it'***
>
> **Lucy Robinson**
> *President, ESCIF*

▲ *Chelsea Pettitt has been in dispute with her council over travel plans*

The ICB made a rapid U-turn in June when Robinson threatened legal action, arguing that it was acting unlawfully. It then agreed to fund her care overseas on condition she dropped plans for a judicial review.

Analysis by the Guardian shows a wide variety of policies across councils and the NHS. Some are explicit that overseas care is possible, while some agree in principle but attach a string of conditions. Others say overseas travel is allowed only at the discretion of their officials.

"There's a postcode lottery in NHS care and support policy to allow recipients of funding to take their assistants with them outside the UK," said Barraclough, who added she was aware of several cases where disabled individuals had been turned down for care abroad.

Giselle Hoad, founder of the Adult Social Care Warriors campaign group, said: "There's a concern that cultural prejudice about disability - that we don't have families, partners or jobs - means the care system sometimes assumes disabled people should be satisfied with opportunities closer to home."

Disabled people in England can get care funding through two main sources: NHS continuing healthcare, which provides support for daily living for people with the highest needs, and social care paid for by local councils.

Anne-Marie Irwin, a solicitor at Rook Irwin Sweeney who represented Robinson, said NHS care boards had a legal duty to meet a disabled person's assessed needs. As long as the care user remains a resident of the ICB's area, this duty does not stop if they temporarily leave the UK.

Thames Valley said it did not comment on individual cases. It added that, where a patient requested temporary travel abroad, an ICB "may consider if it's appropriate to continue commissioning care to meet their assessed health needs while they are outside the country".

It said its decisions were informed by considerations of patient safety, practical care delivery factors and risk assessment and insurance issues.

Local authorities hold a similar duty to ICBs, previous court judgments suggest.

Chelsea Pettitt, 25, and her parents, have been in dispute with Lancashire county council over her entitlement to care on holiday.

Pettitt, who has cerebral palsy, quadriplegia and learning difficulties, wants to return to Spain where she had a week's break in 2022 accompanied by two assistants. Like other twentysomethings, she loved the sun, the swimming, food and culture. "I felt like I belonged there," she said.

But her parents, Barbara and Alison Pettitt, said they were told by a social worker that Chelsea was no longer eligible for care abroad as she now lived in supported accommodation.

Her care plan specifies two-to-one care for seven nights a year for trips outside Lancashire - but the council stipulates the care must be used by Chelsea to maintain "important relationships" with her birth family and friends. A lack of national guidelines means the family is unsure where this leaves Chelsea's right to choose whether - or where - to travel.

The council said it did not object in principle to Chelsea using her care package on a holiday abroad and it was "working closely with the individual, their family and care provider to understand the issues that have been raised and support a positive resolution".

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: "This government is committed to making sure all those who are eligible for NHS continuing healthcare receive the support they need to live independent and fulfilling lives.

"Integrated care boards are responsible for planning a package of care that meets each individual's needs. We expect them to fulfil this duty in line with national policy and legislation."

Additional research
George Francis Lee

Ex-minister: I unknowingly misled MPs on nuclear bomb test veterans

Kiran Stacey
Policy editor

A former defence minister has admitted misleading parliament over the existence of crucial medical records relating to nuclear bomb test veterans.

Tobias Ellwood said he had unwittingly given MPs incorrect information in 2018 when he told them he had been unable to locate information on veterans' blood tests after being given incorrect information by officials at the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Veterans have been fighting for years to see the records as many seek to prove that serious illnesses such as cancer were linked to their experiences of testing nuclear weapons between 1952 and 1967.

Ellwood's admission will increase pressure on the MoD to explain whether its officials have helped prevent those veterans get justice.

In a piece for the Guardian, Ellwood writes: "In December 2018, as defence minister, I inadvertently misled parliament.

"Asked whether blood samples had been taken from service personnel for radiological monitoring during the nuclear bomb tests, I relayed the line provided to me by the Ministry of Defence: it was 'unable to locate any information' suggesting blood samples had been taken for radiological monitoring at the tests.

"I now know the reality was very different - these samples were taken across the armed services branches. But those veterans seeking compensation for serious illnesses developed after radiation exposure have been unable to access them."

He added: "This is among the greatest scandals in Britain, and it must be addressed."

An MoD spokesperson said: "This government commissioned and completed an extensive records discovery exercise, examining tens of thousands of documents to address longstanding questions from veterans about blood and urine testing policies during the nuclear testing programme.

"The findings have now been published in full, following regular engagement between ministers, nuclear test veterans and community groups throughout the process."

▲ *Tobias Ellwood said he was given incorrect information by the MoD*

Eyewitness

▼ International Space Station
The French astronaut Sophie Adenot working to install an antenna during a six-and-a-half-hour spacewalk
PHOTOGRAPH: EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY/GETTY

World

Iran denounces American 'war crime' after missile kills four people at wedding

William Christou
Beirut

Iran has accused the US of a war crime after a missile blast killed at least four people and injured 68 who were attending a wedding at a private home in a coastal city of southern Iran, as a fresh exchange of strikes raised fears of a renewal of hostilities.

Iranian media said the wedding ceremony was being held in a home in the city of Kuhestak, Hormozgan province, late on Tuesday when a US missile struck, with shrapnel and debris from the strike killing and injuring people.

Among the dead was a four-year-old child, Amir-Ali Karimi, and a 16-year-old, Mohammad Mollahi.

"It's a terrible thing. I'm extremely worried and upset about what happened – really upset," Ali Mollahi, the father of the bride, told Mehr News.

A video of the aftermath shows colourful wedding streamers and decorations strewn across the ground, and shoes abandoned in the rush to escape.

"You wicked people have attacked people's homes and turned their wedding ceremony into a funeral," said a man filming the aftermath, shared by Fars news agency.

The deputy of the provincial government, Ahmad Nafisi, said first responders had headed immediately to the scene and transferred the wounded to hospitals.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson called the US attack a "war crime" and said Iran "will respond to these savage crimes with firmness".

The chief Iranian negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, said the attack had killed families with children, and called the US the "great Satan". "If a power acts like Satan, picks targets like Satan and kills like Satan, it's Satan. Shields a junior Satan that does the same? It's THE Great Satan," Ghalibaf said in a post on X.

The US attacks followed strikes on Sunday, ending an uneasy month-long truce between the US and Iran, and appeared to signal a resumption of another cycle of attacks. US Central Command (Centcom) said the overnight strikes focused on Iranian military targets, including air defence sites, radars and maritime assets.

Iran responded by launching drones and missiles on US bases across the Middle East, including in Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE. Iran's military spokesperson, Lt Col Ebrahim Zolfaghari, vowed "heavier, broader, and more crushing and devastating" retaliation.

Videos of the aftermath of the strike show a caved-in roof, blown-out windows and ground riddled with debris, as well as walls pock-marked with what appeared to be holes from shrapnel. Footage from a nearby hospital showed women in wedding attire watching as injured children were being treated.

"When we arrived there, an explosion occurred. It was very intense. Bricks, stones and cement hit me in the face and head, and many others were injured," a child who was injured at the wedding told the state-affiliated Fars news agency.

A spokesperson for Centcom, Tim Hawkins, said the US was aware of reports of civilian casualties, but the "US military never targets civilians, unlike the [Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps]".

In February, a strike on an elementary school killed at least 156 people, including more than 120 schoolchildren. Independent investigations concluded that the US probably carried out the strike with the assistance of AI, though the US government said the incident remained under investigation.

Pictures of shrapnel collected at the site of Tuesday's attack were published on Iranian state media, and appeared to show the internal components of US munitions. Trevor Ball, an independent weapons analyst, identified some of the remnants as belonging to the Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response (Slam-Er) missile, which is made by the US weapons company Boeing. The Slam-Er is a 1,500-pound, GPS-guided missile touted by Boeing to be "extremely accurate".

It was unclear if the home where the wedding was being held was struck directly, or if a missile hit close to the home and debris from the strike hit the home and its occupants. CCTV footage captured at least six strikes in the area within a minute. A separate strike appeared to hit a communications tower about 150 metres from the home.

Authorities said that several "telecommunications and internet towers and sites were also seriously damaged in the latest strikes".

The US has been targeting communications and radar infrastructure to try to stop Iran's blockade of the strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint which prior to the US-Iran war was a transit point for at least 20% of the world's oil supply. Iran has virtually closed the strait since the start of the war.

▼ *The aftermath of the strike on a home in Kuhestak, southern Iran. A four-year-old was among the dead*
PHOTOGRAPH: IRANIAN RED CRESCENT/AFP/GETTY

'It's a fever dream' Crew of US carrier set foot on land after nine months at sea

Natasha May
Pattaya

At Pattaya's Hard Rock Cafe and hotel, the city's mayor and police officials, along with women in traditional Thai dress, waited to greet the sailors who were arriving in civilian clothes off the buses.

The USS Abraham Lincoln's crew of 5,000 had not been ashore for nearly nine months, a record-setting uninterrupted time at sea.

Crew members appeared to have been told not to speak to the gathered journalists about reports of deteriorating living conditions onboard but said they were looking forward to being on dry land, sleeping and going home.

The Hard Rock hotel is around the corner from the Soi 6 alley, known for its go-go bars, one of the many areas that contribute to Pattaya's infamous sex tourism industry. Soi 6 and the neighbouring area would be off-limits for crew after sunset, said Pattaya's mayor, Poramet Ngampichet.

One sailor, Breese, who did not want to give his surname, said: "It's a fever dream right now." He added that he was looking forward to trying Thai food for the first time and meeting new people.

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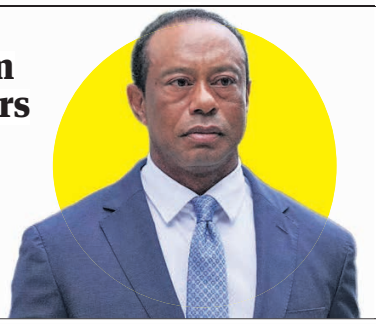


▲ *A sailor waits for the Lincoln to dock after nine months at sea. Left, Capt Dan Keeler, the commanding officer, is welcomed by Pattaya's mayor, Poramet Ngampichet. Below, sailors in civvies walk to their hotel*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANTHONY WALLACE/AFP/GETTY; CHALINEE THIRASUPA/REUTERS

'I just want to pick her up and spin her around. She's my baby, always'

Shakeira Fairfax
On seeing her daughter

The sailors were being given shore leave in staggered groups, so Shakeira Fairfax, who has travelled from New Jersey, had to wait one more day to be reunited with her daughter, Jada.

Fairfax said she was mostly excited: "I just want to pick her up and spin her around. She's my baby, always." But she added: "I don't know who I'm welcoming home."

Jada finished her basic training in October and shipped out in November, two months before the US and Israel launched their war on Iran. Jada had celebrated her 25th birthday onboard the Abraham Lincoln in June.

Fairfax said there had been an "abrupt" end to communication when the war broke out, but she had since been able to check in with her daughter intermittently and send care packages.

The ship's captain, Dan Keeler, acknowledged to the media that the carrier "looks like a dirty car in a parking lot". As for the reports of the conditions onboard, he said: "I don't know how to say it other than there's a disconnect between reporting back home and what's happening on the ship."

Keeler added: "First-time sailors are going to complain about the food, the living conditions.

"We did get caught up in an election cycle and got thrown around like a football."

He said there was plenty of food on the ship but admitted it became hard to get fresh fruit and vegetables, which stopped being served. They also had to be careful with supplies of soap and toothpaste to ensure every sailor had some, he added.

Asked about the reports of attempted suicides onboard the ship, Keeler did not answer, apart from saying there was an open investigation.

As for comments from the US president, which included claims that the 270-day deployment was "not nearly long enough", Keeler said: "The president speaks for himself."

Crew from the USS Higgins also arrived at the Hard Rock hotel. When asked about conditions on the two vessels, Ethan Johnson, a cook onboard the Higgins, said: "We joined the military, it's not a cruise ship."

Johnson said there had been plenty of meat and vegetables onboard the Higgins.

Many local businesses have put up signs welcoming the sailors, hoping it will generate revenue during the rainy season, which is slow for tourism. Ngampichet said if each soldier spent $100-$150 (£75-£110) per day the visit would generate 100m Thai baht (£2.5m).

Ann Khamma had sold four pairs of Thailand's ubiquitous elephant pants to crew members that afternoon and said she was hopeful that as more disembarked more business would come her way. "If they come, I'm ready," she added.

Monica Kulaphataninthorn, who runs a gift shop in a local night market, said she was "excited" about what the visit could mean for her business but had not quite yet seen the result.

Kristopher Robinson, a naval attache with the US embassy in Bangkok, said Pattaya was chosen as the destination for R&R because the "people of Thailand have a history of being wonderful hosts not just to US sailors but people from all around".

Robinson said the crew would take as much opportunity for rest as possible and conduct themselves in accordance with US and local laws.

"Sailors here, like all tourists, they're going to enjoy Pattaya's great food and wonderful culture," he added.

Israel 'seeking Trump support for plan to oust Palestinians from Gaza'

Andrew Roth
Global affairs correspondent

Israel's defence minister has said his country is seeking Donald Trump's support for plans to expel Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, in what has widely been condemned as a potential war crime.

Israel Katz, during a conference hosted by the Israeli news site Ynet and the newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth, said there was "no real solution for Gaza in the end without this migration". He added that Israel's government was "organised and prepared to get them out – by sea, by air, by every way possible."

Trump had discussed a US takeover of the Gaza Strip in early 2025 that would involve removing Palestinians from the territory, but has since retreated from those plans. A 20-point peace plan drawn up by the White House last year did not call for facilitating deportation of Palestinians from Gaza.

Katz said he believed US support could tip regional opinion in favour of a forced resettlement of the Palestinian population. He said Trump's approval was crucial in order to convince neighbouring countries to accept Palestinian refugees.

"Every country that is willing to take them in wants American backing," he said. "Trump has not cancelled this at the moment – he has frozen it."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request from the Guardian for comment.

Katz pointed to Egypt, which he said had lobbied the US to oppose a forced removal of the Palestinian population. "It has not been cancelled," he said. "It is being discussed all the time, including now, and I think there is no other solution in the end that is in everyone's interest."

The remarks come during a competitive election season in Israel, where Benjamin Netanyahu and his rightwing allies have appealed to voters by calling for more aggressive measures against Palestinians.

Yesterday Netanyahu visited an Israeli military post close to the "yellow line" in the Gaza Strip. Israel has said it will not pull back from that line until Hamas disarms, despite calls for a phased withdrawal to facilitate a recent ceasefire with Hamas.

"We control the territory and are staying on this line," Netanyahu said. "We are doing everything to achieve our goal – disarming Hamas and demilitarizing Gaza. Gaza will no longer pose a threat to Israel."

Hong Kong democracy activist pleads guilty in national security case

Danny Vincent
Hong Kong

One of Hong Kong's most prominent pro-democracy activists pleaded guilty yesterday to conspiring to seek foreign sanctions against Hong Kong and China, a national security charge that carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Joshua Wong is accused of working with the exiled Hong Kong activist Nathan Law to urge foreign powers to impose sanctions, blockades or other hostile measures against China.

Hong Kong's high court heard that Wong had visited foreign countries and met foreign politicians to lobby for sanctions.

Prosecutors said he had continued to call for sanctions on Hong Kong and China after the implementation of the national security law.

Wong, 29, has been continuously imprisoned since November 2020. In 2022 he pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit subversion for his role in an unofficial primary election. He had been due to be released in January.

Wong waved at supporters as he entered the dock, and stood with his arms behind his back as he pleaded guilty to the charges.

He is expected to be sentenced later. The offence is punishable by a prison term of three to 10 years, or up to life imprisonment if the offence is deemed to be "of a grave nature". Pleading guilty could typically result in a reduced sentence.

Outside court, people had queued overnight to secure a seat at yesterday's hearing.

One supporter who attended criticised the proceedings. "Under a compromised judicial system with zero space for a fair trial, Wong's plea is a forced reality," they said, asking not to be named. "This is not justice, but Beijing's absolute eradication of Hong Kong's dissident voices."

In 2014 Wong, then a teenager, became the international face of the umbrella movement, when thousands of protesters occupied main roads in Hong Kong for 79 days demanding greater democracy. In October 2014 he appeared on the cover of Time magazine under the headline: "The face of protest".

▲ *Joshua Wong in 2015 when he was a teenage protest leader. He pleaded guilty to an earlier charge in 2022*
PHOTOGRAPH: VINCENT YU/AP PHOTO

'The government wants to keep him behind bars so as not to let him become a symbol of resistance'

Frances Hui
Campaigner

When protests erupted in 2019, over a bill that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China, Wong was serving a sentence for his role in the 2014 demonstrations. He was released at the height of the movement and immediately joined calls for the bill to be withdrawn.

In 2020 Beijing imposed a wide-ranging national security law on Hong Kong. The authorities said the law was needed to restore stability to the international financial hub. Critics say that, six years on, the law is continuing to expand in scope.

Wong is the only activist in Hong Kong prosecuted twice under the national security law. Supporters say the prosecution heavily relied on his advocacy before it was enacted and argue his case has been applied retroactively.

Frances Hui, from the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation, said: "It's obvious that the government wants to keep him behind bars for as long as they can, so as to isolate him and not to let him become a visible symbol of resistance."

Wong's case has attracted widespread condemnation. Elaine Pearson, the Asia director of Human Rights Watch, said: "By stacking one charge after another against Joshua Wong, the authorities are ensuring that the democracy icon stays behind bars, silencing him and the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement he helped lead and inspire."

This week the former Conservative party leader Iain Duncan Smith urged the British government to raise Wong's case with Beijing, saying: "Enough is enough. It's time to stop chasing peaceful protesters."

Additional reporting
Associated Press

Island in Canada emerges out of the blue, vanishes and reappears

Leyland Cecco
Toronto

A thickly forested island appeared mysteriously on a western Canadian lake. Nearly 150 metres long and 75 metres wide, it took local people by surprise as it was not on maps or navigation charts.

One boater took a video of the island, capturing nearly 100 trees undulating in the lake's waters. Then, within days, it had disappeared.

On Monday, the island made its second appearance nearly 20 miles from its location earlier in August – leaving residents to wonder how an entire island can simply vanish.

The mystery has unfolded in the middle of Williston Lake, a long and narrow reservoir created after the WAC Bennett dam flooded the region in the early 1970s. At nearly 650 sq miles it is the largest body of fresh water in Canada's westernmost province.

Bob Gammer, a spokesperson for BC Hydro, the government-owned utility that operates the reservoir and dam, said the island was "quite something and rather unbelievable" when he first saw the images.

"In the days of AI, you really needed another form of verification or evidence like a corroborating eyewitness account," he said. "And soon, we got that."

Satellite imagery confirmed the island was in fact real, and floating in the main body of the reservoir, roughly 60 miles west of the dam.

BC Hydro believes the island is the result of years of trees and plants growing largely undisturbed on the woody debris along sheltered sections of the reservoir's shoreline.

Similar islands have shown up across the globe, including Wisconsin's famed Forty Acre Bog. The giant, floating island on Lake Chippewa is knitted together by peat, mud, roots and trees.

Measuring roughly 1.2 hectares (3 acres) in size, the British Columbia island is also bursting with life: birds and small animals are living among the mix of coniferous and broadleaf trees. Observers suspect the root systems in the water hides some of the lake's best fish.

▲ *The forested island on Williston Lake first appeared last month*

Gammer likened the growing conditions to hydroponics and said: "Well-fed trees growing on a decaying food source with lots of water … they could grow pretty quick."

The reservoir, he added, was higher than it had been in 14 years as a result of the high winter snowpack and consistent summer rains that have raised water levels in the Peace River and the lake.

"Suddenly, there are all of the right conditions to potentially lift this kind of little island from where it was, and bring it out into open water," he said.

Between sightings, the island may have drifted to shore. Its seeming disappearance "doesn't mean it's gone to the bottom of the reservoir", Gammer previously told CBC. "It may have returned to a more sheltered area along the shoreline."

BC Hydro does not know how old the trees on the island are, but with the right conditions the forest could "just stay there for years" and grow. Local people speculated the trees could be decades old.

"It's not like they're just a bunch of little shrubs. This is an island with larger trees and it's something you really have to wrap your mind around," said Grammar. "It's not an everyday thing. This is really really unusual."

Rocky Avery, a longtime resident of the area who first posted the clip to social media to warn about a possible hazard, said he would "totally jump on that island if I could".

"It's probably a bit shaky on the outer sections, but with those huge trees in the centre, I imagine someone could walk on it," he said.

Gammer cautioned boaters from attempting to become the first to set foot on it, saying that videos show trees moving back and forth on a "delicate, thin layer of logs", adding it is "very unsafe" and "very unstable".

On Parr
A portrait of the late photographer Martin Parr by Siân Davey is hung on the side of a building as part of the Images Vevey biennial arts festival in Switzerland, from 5-27 September.

PHOTOGRAPH: JEAN-CHRISTOPHE BOTT/EPA

Speed limit on residential roads in Japan cut to 30km/h

Justin McCurry
Tokyo

Japanese authorities have slashed the speed limit on many residential roads from 60km/h (37mph) to 30km/h in an attempt to reduce deaths and injuries among pedestrians.

The limit, which came into effect on Tuesday, applies to narrow residential roads with no maximum speed signs or centre line, which are common in cities. The measures apply to about 540,000 miles of roads that are less than 5.5 metres wide. They account for about 70% of roads, according to Mainichi Shimbun.

While the number of deaths in traffic accidents fell to a record low of 2,457 last year, the improvement has been seen mainly on larger roads. Deaths involving children and older people on residential roads have remained steady at about 300 a year since 2021, and rose in 2025, according to the national police agency.

The introduction in 2011 of "zone 30" areas on a limited number of streets cut deaths and serious injuries by 30%, the Mainichi said. Police data shows the pedestrian mortality rate is less than 1% in accidents involving vehicles travelling at or below 30km/h. The rate rises to 2.7% at 30-40km/h and to 17.4% at 50-60km/h.

▲ *Tupac Shakur was gunned down in 1996. He was only 25 years old*

'Long overdue': Tupac fans on conviction for rapper's killing

Uwa Ede-Osifo

A criminal conviction this week for the 1996 murder of the rapper Tupac Shakur has sent shockwaves through his legions of fans who have waited three decades for answers.

Duane "Keffe D" Davis, a former California gang leader, was found guilty of murder on Monday for the role he played in orchestrating the fatal shooting.

Some of Shakur's fans have been reflecting on what the artist meant to them while expressing bittersweet joy about the long-awaited moment.

As a teenager, Kelly Wilson, 48, was enamoured with hip-hop's boy wonder (Shakur was just 25 years old when he died). "There was a lot of depth to him that I just didn't hear elsewhere," he said.

During his life, Shakur faced blowback over lyrics that detractors regarded as glorifying violence or gang culture. But he was also lauded as an inner-city chronicler, penning social critiques of racial inequality and police brutality.

"I'm as white Irish as you get," Wilson said, but he connected with Shakur's overarching philosophy, which Wilson described as: "Speak for the people who don't have a voice."

He also called the verdict "long overdue," adding that others who may have been more culpable had since passed away. Authorities have long suspected Davis's nephew, Orlando Anderson, of being the gunman. Anderson died in 2004.

Casey Rain, a British musician, was a moderator for HitEmUp.com, a forum dedicated to Shakur that was popular in the early noughties.

"I don't mind admitting that there was a time in the years immediately following his passing where I definitely bought into some of those conspiracy theories … For somebody to be convicted of doing it, that grounds it and makes it real," he said.

In the end, Rain was also struck by how the case against Davis relied on his own admissions regarding the deadly night. "It finally got solved because one of the people involved in it just wouldn't shut up talking about it. It's a really strange kind of irony. It's astonishing," Rain said.

Davis is set to be sentenced in October. The 63-year-old is facing at least 40 years in prison.

Zelenskyy: drones making Russian airspace unsafe

▼ *A woman in a Moscow park stops to watch as smoke billows from a reported Ukrainian drone strike on the Russian capital* PHOTOGRAPH: EPA

Dan Sabbagh *Kyiv*
Pjotr Sauer

Volodymyr Zelenskyy has declared that Russia's airspace is becoming unsafe for commercial airlines as Vladimir Putin promised to step up strikes against Ukraine's energy facilities in the run-up to winter.

The Ukrainian president yesterday said there was no intention to directly threaten civilian flights, but the growing number of attack drones being flown into Russia by Ukraine would have to be "taken into account" by the aviation industry.

"We want to warn every airline that uses Russian airspace, every insurer and everyone who still uses Russia's key airports: Russian airspace is becoming completely unsafe," Zelenskyy said in a statement.

Ukraine's foreign secretary, Andrii Sybiha, said Kyiv had notified the International Civil Aviation Organization that "Russian airspace is not safe for civilian aviation" because of increased military activity.

A rapid escalation of Ukrainian military capability in the past few months has allowed Ukraine's forces to strike at targets deep inside Russia.

Reliable figures for the number of drone flights are hard to obtain but Ukraine is already capable of launching a few hundred a day, and military sources say the country is chasing a target of 1,000 drones in an effort to hurt Russia's economy.

Justin Bronk, an aviation analyst at the Royal United Services Institute thinktank, said he believed Ukraine could force "periodic closures of Russian airports on a semi-regular basis" by relying on an element of surprise.

It could do so by flying small waves of drones at short notice, though trying to close an airport permanently would be difficult, he said, because a sustained attack would become predictable and easier for air-defence systems to halt.

Ukraine's commercial airspace has been closed since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2022 because Russia has been able to strike targets throughout the country.

This year, Ukraine has begun bombing oil refineries and warehouses near Moscow and St Petersburg, as well as hitting military and industrial sites at ranges in excess of 2,000km (1,250 miles) from its border.

Concerns about the safety of civilian aviation in the war zone linger. A Malaysia Airlines plane was shot down as it flew over eastern Ukraine in 2014 by Russian separatists operating a surface-to-air missile launcher. All 298 people onboard were killed.

Putin described Zelenskyy's remarks as "state terrorism", saying: "Negotiations are not conducted with terrorists."

Giving one of his most detailed updates on the war, the Russian leader told a news conference that Moscow was preparing to step up its campaign bombing Ukraine's energy facilities this winter, aiming to knock out heating and electricity supplies.

"The Russian armed forces have been ordered to prepare and carry out mass strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities. They are striking us, and they will get a response," Putin told reporters after a two-day summit in Kyrgyzstan. "I'm not saying we'll collapse the economy there, but it's a serious challenge for them."

Asked whether Russia would strike British military facilities in the UK that produced weapons for Ukraine, Putin sidestepped the question, saying: "That's a military secret."

Russia earlier accused the UK of "escalation" and threatened "consequences" after reports that British-made drones were being used by Ukraine in long-range strikes.

Putin sought to stress that Russian forces retained the initiative on the battlefield in Ukraine, despite Moscow's slowing progress. He appeared to push back against western intelligence reports suggesting he was being given an overly optimistic picture of the war, saying he relied on numerous sources of information that together provided him with an "objective assessment".

At one point, however, Putin claimed that Russian forces had captured the Ukrainian town of Sviatohirsk in the Donetsk region. The claim was not supported by battlefield maps produced by DeepState, a Ukrainian monitoring group.

Even pro-war Russian commentators disputed Putin's account. "This is simply a lie," wrote the blogger Alexei Larkin. "The level of the president's misinformation is critical."

Russia's sluggish advance on the battlefield has fuelled speculation that the Kremlin could resort to another round of mobilisation, the first since Putin called up 300,000 reservists in September 2022.

Zelenskyy and western officials have warned that Moscow could be preparing such a move, though its diplomats do not consider it a certainty. Addressing the speculation for the first time, Putin dismissed the prospect of a new mobilisation as "nonsense".

The Russian leader also said he was comfortable dealing with Donald Trump's special envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner as part of efforts to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine, although he acknowledged talks were "currently frozen, to a certain extent".

The CIA director, John Ratcliffe, made a rare visit to Moscow last week and reportedly pressed the Kremlin to end the war.

Ukrainian strikes are reaching further into Russia

Deep (+200km) Ukranian missile and drone strikes since 2022, grouped by 20km² area

Source: ACLED, ISW. Notes: hatched area shows Ukrainian territory controlled by Russia as of August 2026. Excludes strikes less than 200km from this front. Excludes intercepted strikes

Germany Politics polarised in wake of Leipzig attack plot

Kate Connolly
Berlin

Even before the German government laid the blame this week on Russia for an attempted drone attack at Leipzig airport, the topic of German ties to Moscow was high on the political agenda.

But the timing of the Leipzig announcement - days before a key regional vote - has exposed the extent to which German politics is polarised on the issue.

The party leading national polls and in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, which votes this weekend, the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), has repeatedly called for a closer bond with the Kremlin and for its cheap oil and gas to flow to Germany once again, despite Moscow's onslaught on Ukraine.

Germany is already on tenterhooks. The interior minister, Alexander Dobrindt, had warned that Berlin faced a growing threat of hybrid warfare, and yesterday police were investigating a second sabotage assault on the electricity grid within just 24 hours.

An explosion at Augsburg railway station in the early hours also initially looked as if it might fall into the same category, illustrating the extent to which the country remains on high alert for attacks on its vital infrastructure.

The resulting uncertainty appears to be grist to the mill for the AfD. Its foreign policy spokesperson, Markus Frohnmaier, accused the government of sorting acts of sabotage "according to political expediency".

While the government had "escalated the situation against Russia within days", he said, the 2022 attack on the Nord Stream pipeline, where Ukrainian operators are suspected of being responsible for sabotaging a key route for Russian gas, had so far remained without consequence.

"This is not a consistent security policy but rather a double standard in foreign policy," Frohnmaier claimed, adding he was convinced the government would use the Leipzig incident "as justification for even more support for Ukraine and an even deeper involvement of Germany in this war".

Wary of escalating a conflict with Moscow, the government of Friedrich Merz waited days before making its painstakingly worded declaration. The foreign minister, Johann Wadephul, said: "We are not at war, but we are a daily target of hybrid warfare."

The details released yesterday of two Russian suspects who were identified as having been involved in the Leipzig incident are unlikely to assuage the AfD.

Its leading MP Dietmar Bartsch said that the suspicions of Russian involvement did not justify the government's decision to shut down the Russian consulate in Bonn, as well as a sprawling Russian cultural centre in Berlin, and would not make Germany safer. On the contrary, they increased the risk of a "major war" drawing closer, he said.

In contrast, Konstantin von Notz, a foreign policy expert for the Greens, praised the government's "significantly clear language" over Moscow's behaviour, even as he described it as "long overdue."

With the AfD on about 42% in Saxony Anhalt and possibly poised to form the first far-right administration since the second world war, Merz's Christian Democratic Union, on 22%, is under intense pressure.

Fears over deteriorating relations with Moscow could yet be felt at the ballot box.

Golfer Woods given five-year driving ban after Florida crash

Guardian sport

Tiger Woods had his driver's licence suspended for five years yesterday after reaching a plea agreement in a case following a crash in Florida in March in which his car overturned.

Woods, 50, initially faced the more serious offence of driving under the influence, but that was dropped under the terms of an agreement with prosecutors in which he agreed to plead no contest to lesser charges of careless and reckless driving.

Woods also chose not to contest a charge of refusing to submit to a lawful test and was fined $500 (£370). Court records show he paid $2,131.44 in fines and costs following the hearing.

The plea agreement brings an end to the criminal case arising from the golfer's crash near his home on Jupiter Island, Florida. He had previously pleaded not guilty to both charges.

Woods, dressed in a dark suit and tie, arrived at the Martin County courthouse seated in the front passenger seat of a black SUV. He did not answer questions from reporters as he and his girlfriend, Vanessa Trump, walked in and out of the building for the change-of-plea hearing.

The Martin County sheriff, John Budensiek, said Woods was driving a Land Rover that overturned after he attempted to overtake a truck on a narrow two-lane road shortly before 2pm on 27 March.

The truck had been slowing to turn into a driveway when Woods approached at what Budensiek described as a "high rate of speed" on a road with a 30mph limit. Woods's vehicle clipped a trailer, veered off and came to rest on its driver's side after sliding along the roadway.

Woods, who was alone in the vehicle, was able to exit through the passenger side and was not injured.

▲ *Police body camera images of Woods at the crash scene in March*

Investigators said he had showed signs of impairment, and they subjected him to roadside tests before taking him into custody.

A breath test showed no alcohol in his system, but Woods refused to provide a urine sample for drug testing. He told investigators he had taken several medications earlier that day, including drugs for high blood pressure and cholesterol as well as ibuprofen and the prescription painkiller Vicodin, according to court filings released by prosecutors.

The filings also detailed a series of unusual remarks Woods made to officers at the scene. About an hour after the crash, he spoke of "10 to 15 drones" equipped with cameras flying over his home and car. At another point, after stepping away while on the phone, Woods told an officer he had "just [been] talking to the president" before trailing off. Donald Trump said later that he had spoken with Woods following the crash.

Woods also told officers he had been looking down at his phone to change the radio station when the collision occurred.

Prosecutors later sought access to Woods's prescription records from the months leading up to the crash. His attorneys objected, arguing that the records were private, and asked a judge to determine whether they were relevant to the case and to restrict their disclosure.

Days after his arrest, Woods announced that he would step away from golf "to seek treatment and focus on my health". A judge subsequently granted him permission to travel abroad to enter a treatment facility, which his lawyer said was necessary for an intensive, individualised programme.

The crash was another high-profile traffic incident for Woods. In February 2021, he was seriously injured when his SUV veered off a road in Los Angeles at high speed, leaving him with severe leg and ankle injuries.

He was also arrested on a drink-driving charge in south Florida in 2017 after police found him asleep behind the wheel of a damaged vehicle. Woods later said he had taken a problematic combination of prescription medications and pleaded guilty to reckless driving.

Another incident took place in 2009, when Woods crashed his SUV into a fire hydrant and a tree outside his home in Windermere, Florida.

An 82-time winner on the PGA Tour, Woods has not competed in an official PGA event since July 2024.

▶ *Tiger Woods leaving court with his girlfriend, Vanessa Trump, after a plea agreement with prosecutors*
PHOTOGRAPH: SAUL MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

US not seeking to 'take' oil reserves from Venezuela, says Trump official

Tom Phillips
Rio de Janeiro

The US energy secretary, Chris Wright, yesterday denied Washington was seeking to commandeer huge quantities of Venezuelan oil, amid growing criticism of Donald Trump's energy deal with the country's interim leaders.

"Absolutely not," Wright replied when asked by a CNBC journalist if the US was engaged in a "heavy-handed" attempt to "take" Venezuelan oil in violation of the South American country's constitution. Wright landed in Venezuela's capital, Caracas, on Tuesday, four days after Trump announced what he called "the biggest oil deal in world history".

"I think we are seeing an absolutely historic transformation of both Venezuela and the relations between Venezuela and the US," Wright said of the deal, which Trump has claimed will give the US control of 65bn barrels of Venezuelan oil. The White House said the deal would help secure US "energy dominance for the next century" as well as "purging foreign malign influence from our back yard" by excluding China and Russia from oilfields in the country with the world's largest proven oil reserves.

However, there has been criticism from across the political spectrum. The Wall Street Journal's editorial board said Trump's deal with Venezuela's unelected interim president, Delcy Rodríguez, "looks less like a normal commercial transaction than it does the famous scene of US businessmen meeting with the Cuban strongman in The Godfather Part II".

"The US government is essentially getting in bed with a foreign dictator and her favoured capitalist," the newspaper said in reference to Alejandro Betancourt, the Venezuelan tycoon at the centre of the deal.

The economist Francisco Rodríguez told Democracy Now: "It's clear that this is not a deal that any Venezuelan government would have entered into unless this country had been subject to an invasion, and unless its authorities had been held at gunpoint. We've replaced gunboat diplomacy for gunpoint diplomacy."

Rodríguez was installed as interim president on 5 January, two days after President Nicolás Maduro was abducted by US special forces in Caracas. Trump warned Rodríguez, who was Maduro's vice-president, she would face a worse fate if she did not toe the line. Rodríguez has since made a series of concessions to Washington, which her political movement, Chavismo, had spent years denouncing as imperialists bent on stealing Venezuela's resources.

She said the oil deal had "endless" benefits and would help produce more than $209bn that could be used to improve healthcare and education.

Guinea-Bissau voters approve expanding presidential powers

Eromo Egbejule
Abidjan

Voters in Guinea-Bissau have approved a new constitution significantly expanding presidential powers before elections due in December.

According to provisional results, 70% of voters approved the changes to the tiny west African state's first constitutional amendment since revisions that ended the one-party socialist state more than 30 years ago.

The turnout for the referendum on Sunday was reportedly more than 55%, amounting to an estimated 544,060 people.

The new constitution will reduce the number of seats in parliament from 102 to 65 and cut electoral constituencies from 29 to 12. Presidential candidates will be required to have lived continuously in Guinea-Bissau for at least five years, a measure believed to target diaspora-based politicians with significant followings.

The outcome is expected to pave the way for December's elections. Many hope they will steady the political landscape in Guinea-Bissau, which has been through a series of turbulent periods since its declaration of independence from Portugal was globally recognised in 1974. Since then it has had at least 10 coup attempts, half of which have been successful.

The most recent came after last November's disputed presidential elections. Both candidates declared victory, citing electoral malpractice by the other's camp. The military forcefully intervened, setting up a transitional ruling council led by Gen Horta Inta-A Na Man, a former military chief of general staff.

70%
The proportion of voters who supported sweeping changes to Guinea-Bissau's constitution

Na Man said: "What we want after this referendum is to allow whoever wins the elections to see out their mandate without hindrance."

Nelson Moreira, the second vice-president of the transitional council, said the old constitution, which dates from 1993, had often been cited as the cause of instability in Guinea.

The leading opposition party, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, which was barred from fielding a presidential candidate in last year's election, had asked its supporters to boycott the referendum, which it called a democratic farce.

Domingos Simões Pereira, its leader, said before the vote: "What will happen on 30 August is the continuation of the coup d'état carried out on 26 November."

Business

BP hires new chair as it seeks to draw line under years of boardroom drama

Julia Kollewe

BP has appointed a new chair after a months-long search following the controversial ousting of Albert Manifold, seeking to draw a line under years of boardroom turmoil at the UK oil and gas company.

Ian Tyler, who has served as the interim chair and has sat on the BP board as a non-executive director since April 2025, will assume the role on a permanent basis immediately.

His appointment comes after Manifold's shock removal in late May after only eight months in the role, with BP citing "serious concerns" about his tenure.

Amanda Blanc, BP's senior independent director who led the search for a new chair and also runs the insurer Aviva, announced yesterday she would stand down at next year's annual meeting.

She was criticised after Manifold's short tenure as chair, because she had led the process that led to his appointment to replace Helge Lund. When Manifold left, Blanc said he had helped drive BP's transformation but that there had been "governance oversight and conduct issues" that the board deemed unacceptable.

Reports claimed senior colleagues had felt belittled by Manifold. He was also accused of aggressive behaviour and acting as if he had been an executive rather than a chair.

Manifold responded by accusing the company of firing him without warning and disputed reports about his conduct.

Blanc came under fire after praising Manifold for his "relentless focus on performance which is well suited to BP's needs" when he was appointed chair last July, after what she described as a "rigorous and comprehensive global search".

> ***'Tyler is jointly responsible for BP's governance problems. We're keen to learn what lessons he takes away'***
>
> **Mark van Baal**
> *Activist investor*

Tyler is a former chief executive of the construction company Balfour Beatty. He chairs the builders' merchants Grafton Group and is a senior independent director of the mining company Anglo American. In the past he chaired Cairn Energy and the housebuilder Vistry Group and served as a non-executive director of the defence contractor BAE Systems.

He is tasked with overseeing a shift in BP's strategy to refocus on fossil fuel extraction and ditch renewable energy investments. The company's chief executive, Meg O'Neill, urged Andy Burnham last month to make use of the UK's oil and gas resources even though BP wants to sell its North Sea business.

O'Neill took the helm in April, the company's third chief executive in less than five years. Bernard Looney, who had set a green strategy, resigned three years ago after admitting that he had failed to fully detail relationships with colleagues. He was succeeded by Murray Auchincloss, who was ousted last December.

Blanc said Tyler brought "significant experience providing challenge and support to executive teams, while maintaining strong governance and oversight on behalf of shareholders".

Tyler said: "I will lead the board's evolution, ensuring we have the depth, experience and capabilities needed to support the company's strategic priorities and long-term value creation. I am committed to establishing regular and transparent engagement with our shareholders."

He said he had asked Blanc to stay, but she believed that after four years it was an appropriate time for her to leave with a new chair in place.

Mark van Baal, the head of the Dutch green activist shareholder group Follow This, said: "Many investors will ask if the new chair is able to fix BP's broken governance."

He said BP's last annual meeting in April showed it was "completely out of touch with its shareholders" after protest votes against several resolutions, including an 18% vote against the re-election of Manifold as chair. More than half opposed BP's plans to scrap its existing climate reporting.

Van Baal added: "Having been on the board since 2025, Tyler is jointly responsible for BP's governance problems. We're keen to learn what lessons he takes away from the triple shareholder rebellion in 2026, and how he aims to fix BP's broken governance."

Banking it How have European windfall levies worked out so far?

Kalyeena Makortoff
Banking correspondent

The countdown is on. Two months before Andy Burnham's inaugural autumn budget, the chancellor, John Healey, is reportedly considering a windfall tax on both banks and oil companies.

The UK's four largest lenders – HSBC, NatWest, Barclays and Lloyds Banking Group – have generated £200bn in pre-tax profits over the past five years, largely off the back of rising interest rates. They are now in the crosshairs of campaigners who say a tax increase could help cover rising household bills as part of Burnham's drive to tackle the cost of living.

The TUC's general secretary, Paul Nowak, who has been pushing hard for a new bank tax, said: "Britain's largest banks are making a fortune. Not because they've suddenly become more competitive or improved their services to customers, but because high interest rates mean that, right now, they can sit back and watch the money roll in."

Any move in the UK would echo similar efforts in mainland Europe. Here are some of the tools used, as well as the benefits and pitfalls of targeting the profits of some of the world's largest banks.

Spain: taxed and undeterred

Spain's prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, revealed plans for a windfall tax in 2022 that would raise €3bn from banks over the following two years to help alleviate cost-of-living pressures.

It spooked investors, wiping more than €5bn off Spanish-listed bank stocks, but politicians pushed ahead, putting a 4.8% "solidarity tax" on the domestic revenue of banks whose income passed €800m. That included fees and net interest income, the amount of money banks make from loan charges, minus what they pay on deposits. The €800m threshold and the focus on domestic revenues meant it broadly excluded small local banks and most foreign lenders' Spanish operations.

Big banks and lobby groups filed legal challenges over the tax, while the European Central Bank (ECB) warned that Spain risked disrupting monetary policy, and damaging lenders' capital positions, which help to cushion the blow of economic shocks. Politicians eventually decided to extend the levy for a further three years to 2027, after raising €1.3bn in the first year, and €1.7bn in 2024. Banks now face a sliding tax rate of between 1% and 7%.

Lithuania: a defence boost

Lithuania's government decided to roll out its own windfall tax on banks in 2023, after forecasts showed lenders were due to rake in €1.3bn in net profits that year. That was three times higher than in 2022, after a surge in interest

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
-32.83	-20.77	+215.71	-1889.70	1.1649	1.3505
10756.45	5793.71	52982.59	64325.64	-0.0026	-0.0033

SOURCE: ICE www.ice.com/data

The business district in Vilnius, Lithuania, where a tax on banks was used to fund more defence spending
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREY RUDAKOV/GETTY IMAGES

rates sparked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The 60% tax, which applied to any net interest income that was 50% higher than the previous four-year average, funded infrastructure projects and boosted defence spending amid Russian threats.

The levy helped raise about €250m in 2023 and €247m in 2024, representing 0.3% of the country's annual GDP, before being extended by an extra year.

But the tax is said to have spooked foreign firms. The banking sector said it also disadvantaged lenders serving local customers, while letting others such as Revolut, which is registered in the country but serves mostly non-residents, off the hook.

Czechia: unrealistic expectations

Czechia announced its own three-year windfall tax on banks to help cover consumers' soaring electricity and gas prices in 2022. The measure, lasting from 2023 to 2025, levied a 60% tax on any profits that were more than double the previous four-year average.

Deeply unpopular with businesses, the tax also caused friction within the far-right ODC party, which said it was interfering with the free market. The then Czech finance minister, Zbyněk Stanjura, talked about scrapping the tax a year earlier than planned, but later admitted the levy had not yet covered state costs linked to the energy crisis. While the finance ministry originally hoped to collect more than 30bn Czech koruna (£1bn) from the country's six largest banks, it ended up raising just 1bn Czech koruna, according to the local broadcaster Ct24.

Italy: a tax that fell flat

While plans for a windfall tax by Giorgia Meloni's rightwing government gained international attention, it was one of the least effective levies.

The prime minister's team shocked markets in August 2023 with plans for a 40% tax on banks' net interest margin. The move drew the ire of lobby groups and wiped €10bn off shares in financial services companies, forcing politicians to water down the proposal a day later with a cap that halved the estimated tax takings to €2.5bn (£2.1bn), from €4.9bn.

The rules eventually came into force, but not before being diluted further. However, Italy's deputy prime minister, Matteo Salvini, has revived plans for a three-year levy that would involve a 5% tax on the profits of Italy's 10 largest banks.

What if the UK followed suit?

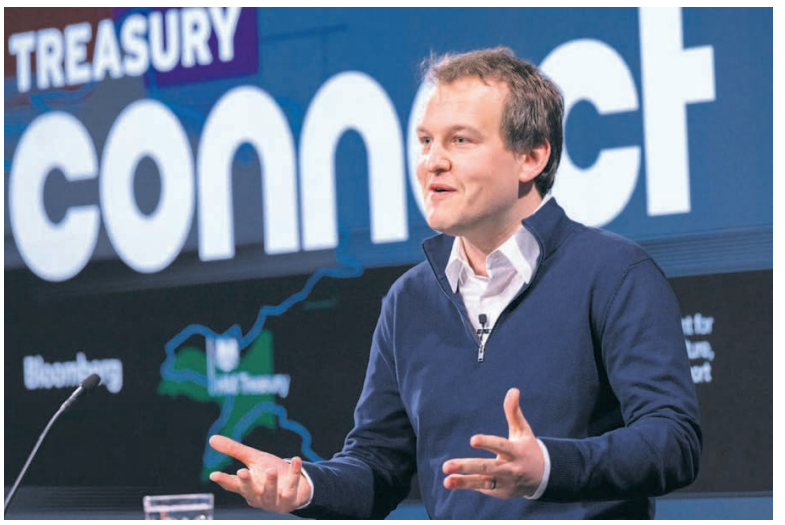
If current trends continue, the UK's four largest banks will rake in £60bn in profits for 2026. Windfall taxes have been used on banks in the UK before, notably in the early 1980s under Margaret Thatcher, and in the 1990s by the Labour chancellor Gordon Brown.

Calculations by the campaign group Positive Money suggest that the UK could raise up to £10.9bn this year from adopting Czechia's model; up to £6.95bn by following Spain's sliding scale; and £2.2bn by following in Lithuania's footsteps.

"Plenty of countries have successfully taxed banks' windfall profits," Nowak said. "This is an easy win for government – and the chancellor should ask the banks to pay a fairer share".

The world's most powerful banker, the JP Morgan boss, Jamie Dimon, has warned the UK against increasing taxes on banks. The chief executive of the lobby group UK Finance, David Postings, said the sector "is a major contributor to the public finances, paying over £43bn in tax last year", a figure that includes income tax payouts on staff salaries.

"Banks based here already pay a corporation tax surcharge and the bank levy, giving them a higher total tax rate than in other major financial centres. Increasing sector-specific taxes would risk damaging the UK's international competitiveness and make it harder to attract investment," he said.



The tech investor Matt Clifford played a central role in creating the UK's AI Security Institute PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS RATCLIFFE/BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES

Concern as architect of UK's AI strategy joins Anthropic

Dan Milmo
Robert Booth
Kiran Stacey

The architect of the UK government's AI strategy has joined the US startup Anthropic in a senior role a year after stepping down from his Downing Street post.

Matt Clifford, a successful tech investor, was appointed as AI opportunities adviser by Keir Starmer last year but resigned from the unpaid role six months later for personal reasons.

His move to the company behind the Claude chatbot has raised concern, with the chair of the House of Commons science, innovation and technology committee, Chi Onwurah, saying his decision to remain as chair of the government-backed Aria funding body represents a "clear conflict of interest".

Clifford will be Anthropic's managing director, international affairs, and will lead the company's engagement with governments outside the US, including in the UK, Europe, Asia-Pacific and India.

Anthropic said Clifford would remain as chair of Aria, the UK's Advanced Research and Invention Agency, which funds "moonshot" science and tech projects. He will also maintain his chair role at Entrepreneurs First, the tech venture capital firm he co-founded.

He was appointed chair of Aria in 2022. Anthropic said he would step back from any matter involving the company at Aria. But Onwurah said the roles clashed and she called on the AI minister, Kanishka Narayan, to intervene.

"His intention to remain as chair of Aria, which spends taxpayer money on cutting-edge research, much of it related to or driven by AI, is a clear conflict of interest and I look forward to the AI minister setting out clear boundaries," Onwurah said.

Anthropic said its commercial relationship with Aria was handled by a separate team to Clifford's and he did not make procurement or programme-level spending decisions at Aria anyway.

"Matt has no involvement in any decision touching Anthropic, and that arrangement has been agreed with Aria and the Department of Business, Innovation, Science and Trade, which is responsible for appointing Aria's chair," the company said.

The UK government has been approached for comment.

Commenting on his role at Anthropic, Clifford said the most important decisions about AI would be made by companies and governments together. He said: "Countries everywhere want real agency over how this technology is built and used, and my job is to make Anthropic a genuine partner in that."

Anthropic, which is preparing for a stock exchange flotation that could value the business at $2tn (£1.5tn), said the UK was "one of dozens" of governments Clifford's team would engage with. "We hire people with expertise and who understand how government works because our work requires it," a spokesperson said.

Clifford worked with Rishi Sunak's government as his representative to the 2023 AI Safety summit, and helped create the organisation that later became the AI Security Institute.

He was appointed as Starmer's AI adviser after drafting the government's AI action plan, which supports the creation of AI growth zones to host datacentres and the building of the UK's own AI models.

$2tn
Potential valuation of Anthropic, as the US-based startup prepares for a stock exchange flotation

Ryanair says oil prices will hit fares, and some airlines may fail

Julia Kollewe

Ryanair has warned that air fares in Europe will jump next year if oil prices remain high, and some airlines could go bust.

The Irish budget carrier has cut its passenger target for the year to 31 March, down from 216 million customers to 214 million, to help reduce its exposure to "unhedged winter oil" during the unprofitable off season, with jet fuel currently trading at $140 (£104) a barrel.

Ryanair expects passenger numbers between November and March to be broadly flat compared with the same period last year.

It said: "If high oil prices continue through to summer 2027, Ryanair believes short-haul air fares in Europe will increase materially to reflect higher oil prices, as some less well-hedged competitors will struggle to maintain capacity or even survive this coming winter season."

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, touched $97.04 a barrel yesterday, the highest level since late July, after renewed clashes between the US and Iran fuelled concerns over supply. It later eased back to just below $95.

Ryanair expects the cut to its winter schedule to reduce its losses over this period by €70m (£60m) to €100m. But, because it has hedged 80% of its jet fuel at $67 a barrel, it expects to have another profitable year, albeit below last year's record profit after tax.

The airline said it was on track to increase summer passenger numbers – between April and October – by more than 5% from 138 million to 145 million. Fares are drifting "modestly down" between August and September compared with last year, as flagged in July.

The rival budget airline Wizz Air reported yesterday that its passenger numbers had grown by 25.9% last month compared with a year earlier, driven by a jump in flight capacity.

Ryanair was forced to reassure travellers in July that its planes were safe after a passenger was saved from being sucked out of a window mid-flight. Ljubisa Karović was pulled out headfirst after an engine failure resulted in parts smashing an acrylic window during a flight from Thessaloniki in Greece to Memmingen near Munich in Germany.

His wife, Svetlana Grković, saved her 61-year-old husband by holding on to his legs, and managed to pull him back in with the help of two other passengers.

Business view
Nils Pratley

PM's Commons speech carried little sense of urgency about the UK's bond market predicament

It's too soon to say the bond markets have turned on Andy Burnham. This week's spike in gilt yields, taking the UK's 30-year borrowing costs to their highest level since 1998, was part of an international sell-off of government debt.

The main contributors are well known. The Iran war has overturned the comforting start-of-the-year thesis of falling global inflation and interest rates. A plunging Japanese yen has kicked away another assumed source of financial stability. The US treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, hasn't calmed nerves with his solo, and so far futile, attempt to bring down US yields. Meanwhile, the early stage of the AI revolution is an exercise in issuing squillions of debt before long-term returns on capital can possibly be assessed.

From the point of view of the mythical bond vigilante, in these circumstances it's only logical to demand a higher return to lend to profligate governments with high debt ratios, which is most of them.

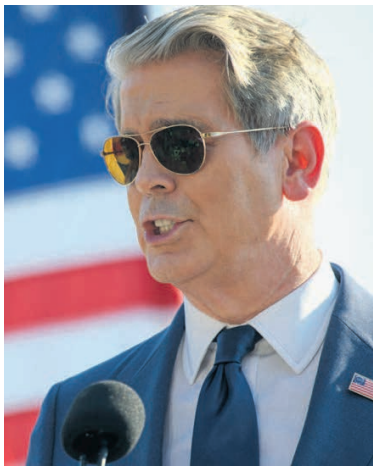
In a narrow sense, then, UK gilts were just moving with the market. It's just that the UK already had the highest borrowing rates in the G7, a status largely reflecting a dismal 20-year record in keeping a lid on inflation and a dependency on energy imports (43% in 2025).

It is also true, unfortunately, that Burnham and the chancellor, John Healey, six weeks into the job, have said nothing to make bond investors rethink the UK's status. Investors have heard the dutiful commitment to Rachel Reeves's fiscal rules, but Burnham's Commons speech yesterday carried little sense of urgency about the UK's financial predicament, or appreciation of how 10-year gilt yields at 5.2% will cause damage if sustained for long.

More "public control" of utilities may be desirable. But, even when the ambiguous meaning is made clearer, how does it translate into, say, substantially lower costs of building infrastructure? Should it really be a top economic priority?

"Markets are sceptical that 'devolution' and 'control' are levers for lower government-led inflation," commented Panmure Liberum economist Simon French. "Burnham/Healey's unenviable task is to prove they are the right levers. If they fail then a very painful period of financial repression/demand side-led disinflation will be necessary."

There is an uncomfortable sense that the bond market expects next month's budget to be a bigger event than Burnham and Healey will produce. The tone of Burnham's Commons speech was "the last thing investors wanted to hear", said former Goldman Sachs economist Lord O'Neill – quite a verdict from a friendly critic who was being lined up for a role in government until recently.



▲ *Scott Bessent is also attempting to bring down bond yields in the US*

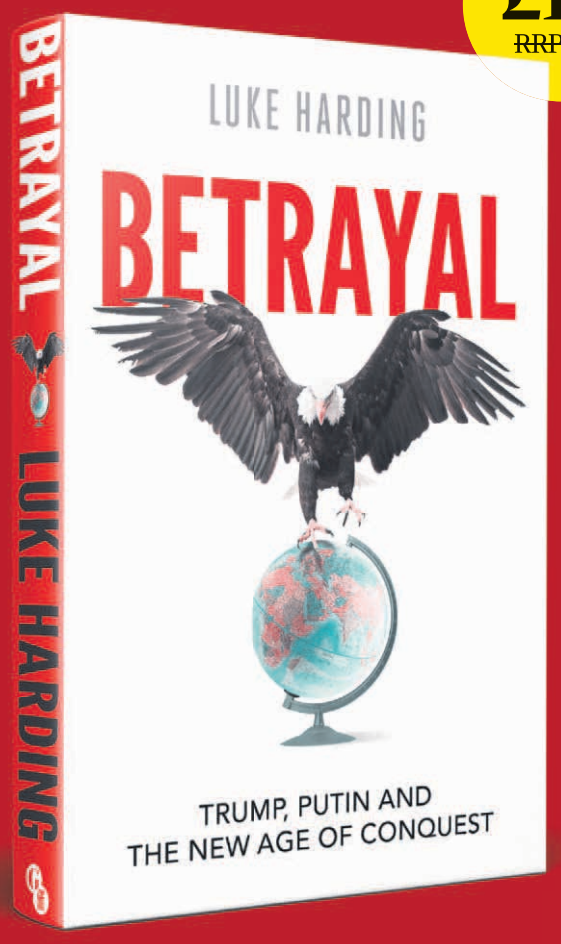
> *The UK already had the highest borrowing rates in the G7, largely reflecting a dismal 20-year record in keeping a lid on inflation*

But one can see O'Neill's point. He told the BBC that high government borrowing costs would force Labour to "get real" about "dealing with the triple lock" and "excessive" welfare spending. There has been little rolling of the pitch, as they say in Westminster, in either of those directions to date.

It may be, of course, that impressions are mistaken and next month's promised 10-year economic plan turns out to be a big exercise in addressing energy costs, defence spending, social care, housing shortages and all the other main challenges. But it is also easy to imagine an alternative script in which hard decisions are deferred and the UK-specific action in the bond market turns uglier – especially if, say, disruption to global energy markets looks likely to last the winter.

Labour has spent 2026 defenestrating one leader and anointing another. It needs something to show for it. Burnham speaks of giving businesses and consumers "breathing space". That task is easier when the government itself is getting some breathing space from the bond markets. Whatever the chosen mix of spending cuts and tax rises, the budget needs details.

Brilliant reporting from the frontlines of a new age of conquest



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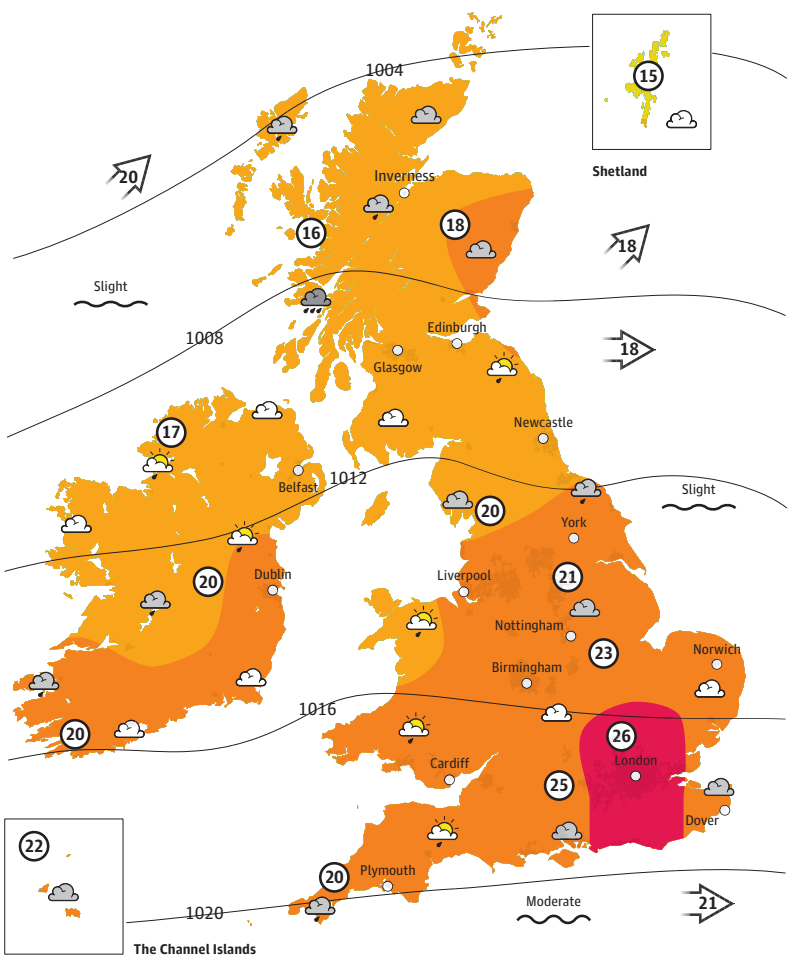
Weather
Thursday 3 September 2026

UK and Ireland Noon today

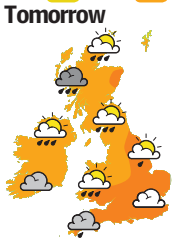
Sunny · Mist · Fog · Sunny intervals · Hazy · Mostly cloudy · Overcast/dull · Sunny showers · Sunny and heavy showers · Light showers · Rain · Sleet · Light snow · Snow showers · Heavy snow · Ice · Thundery rain · Thundery showers · Temperature, ºC · Wind speed, mph · Windy

35C 30 25 20 15 10 5 0 -5 -10 -15 -20

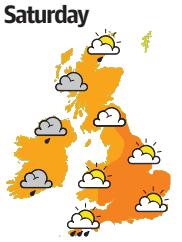


Forecast

Low 15 High 19
Tomorrow



Low 12 High 19
Saturday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

Latest	
31 Aug 2026	427.33
Weekly average	
23 Aug 2026	426.94
02 Sep 2025	425.14
02 Sep 2016	401.99
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

London
Lows and highs 19 26 · Precipitation 15% · Air pollution Low

Manchester
15 21 · 65% · Low

Edinburgh
12 19 · 60% · Low

Belfast
12 18 · 60% · Low

Birmingham
17 23 · 10% · Low

Brighton
18 20 · 25% · Low

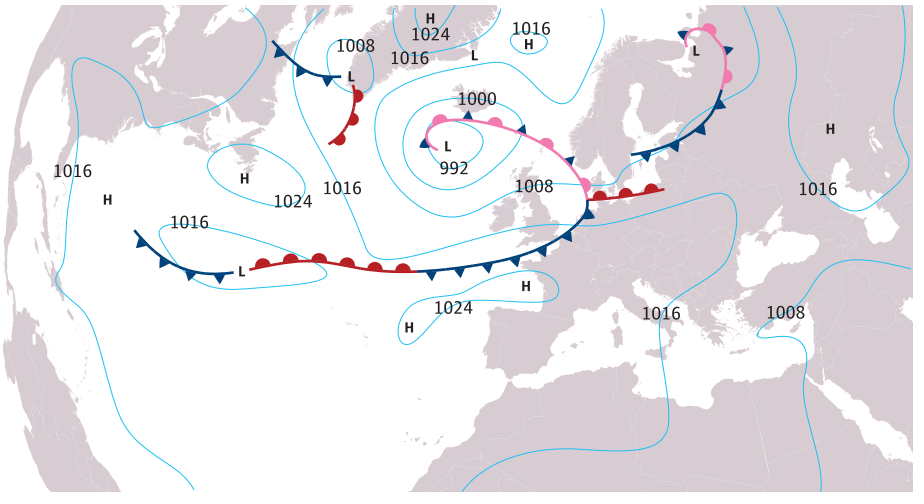
Bristol
18 21 · 50% · Low

Cardiff
17 21 · 50% · Low

Newcastle
13 19 · 80% · Low

Penzance
18 21 · 60% · Low

Atlantic front



Cold front · Warm front · Occluded front · Trough

High tides

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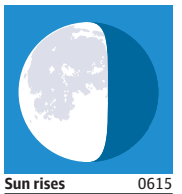
Aberdeen	0446	4.1m	1722	3.8m
Avonmouth	1044	11.8m	2307	11.4m
Barrow	0247	8.7m	1509	8.2m
Belfast	0223	3.5m	1456	3.2m
Cobh	0857	3.7m	2124	3.7m
Cromer	0953	4.9m	2235	4.3m
Dover	0211	6.3m	1436	6.4m
Dublin	0300	3.9m	1533	3.7m
Galway	0848	4.5m	2118	4.3m
Greenock	0346	3.5m	1604	3.3m
Harwich	0312	3.7m	1515	3.9m
Holyhead	0137	5.3m	1402	5.0m
Hull	0954	7.1m	2215	6.5m
Leith	0607	5.3m	1841	4.9m
Liverpool	0221	8.9m	1444	8.4m
London Bridge	0516	6.4m	1733	6.7m
Lossiemouth	0307	3.9m	1540	3.5m
Milford Haven	0942	6.3m	2209	6.2m
Newquay	0836	6.2m	2104	6.0m
North Shields	0651	4.9m	1926	4.5m
Oban	0857	3.4m	2134	3.3m
Penzance	0807	5.0m	2032	4.9m
Plymouth	0918	4.9m	2135	4.8m
Portsmouth	0243	4.4m	1518	4.4m
Southport	0148	8.6m	1411	8.1m
Stornoway	1027	4.1m	2304	4.1m
Portland	1000	1.7m	2224	1.6m
Whitby	0726	5.3m	2000	4.9m
Wick	0240	3.3m	1512	3.0m
Workington	0247	7.8m	1511	7.4m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0615
Sun sets	1942
Moon rises	2144
Moon sets	1425
Last Quarter	4 Sept

AccuWeather.com
Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2026

Lighting up

Belfast	2012 to 0637
Birm'ham	1950 to 0623
Brighton	1942 to 0619
Bristol	1953 to 0628
Carlisle	1959 to 0623
Cork	2016 to 0651
Dublin	2010 to 0640
Glasgow	2007 to 0628
Harlech	2001 to 0632
Inverness	2009 to 0623
London	1942 to 0617
M'chester	1954 to 0624
Newcastle	1954 to 0619
Norwich	1939 to 0610
Penzance	2002 to 0641

Weatherwatch

The world is bracing for a "super" El Niño, and its effects are already being felt in India, where the monsoon has brought less rain than average but more intense downpours.

Meteorologists predict that the current El Niño, which is developing over the Pacific, could be one of the strongest in living memory. India is likely to be heavily affected, particularly later in the monsoon, when El Niño's influence tends to strengthen.

But, as Ligin Joseph of the University of Southampton explains in The Conversation, its effects on India's monsoon are not straightforward. A previous study in Science found that El Niño tended to bring more extreme summer monsoon rainfall to India.

This year, the southern state of Kerala has felt the brunt of the building super El Niño, with about a fifth less rain than normal. Yet intense downpours in the first week of August triggered flash flooding and landslides, killing 26 people.

The super El Niño is expected to peak after India's monsoon season, but Indians are already keeping an anxious eye on the skies, wondering where and when the next deluge may come.

Kate Ravilious

Around the world

Algiers	32	Lisbon	40
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Barcelona	31	Milan	33
Basra	44	Mombasa	30
Beijing	33	Moscow	18
Berlin	21	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	30	N Orleans	33
Brussels	22	Nairobi	26
Budapest	28	New Delhi	31
C'hagen	18	New York	28
Cairo	34	Oslo	20
Cape Town	17	Paris	25
Chicago	32	Perth	18
Corfu	35	Prague	21
Dakar	31	Reykjavik	12
Dhaka	30	Rio de J	25
Dublin	20	Rome	32
Florence	35	Shanghai	30
Gibraltar	26	Singapore	33
H Kong	30	Stockh'm	17
Harare	26	Strasb'g	27
Helsinki	18	Sydney	26
Istanbul	29	Tel Aviv	31
Jo'burg	24	Tenerife	28
K Lumpur	33	Tokyo	30
K'mandu	28	Toronto	27
Kabul	32	Vancouv'r	19
Kingston	33	Vienna	27
Kolkata	32	Warsaw	22
L Angeles	28	Wash'ton	36
Lagos	28	Well'ton	16
Lima	25	Zurich	26

Sport

Football

Andrew Beasley: the transfer window in stats

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Rugby union

Northampton eye 'happy medium' for new Pollock deal

Page 37 →

▲ *Enzo Maresca chose to play Marc Guéhi in central midfield rather than any of the actual midfielders he had available*

CONOR MOLLOY/PROSPORTS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Premier paradox

Why are midfielders becoming more and more expensive, yet less and less good?

Jonathan Liew

Perhaps the only thing you really need to know about the modern midfield role is that Enzo Maresca reckons that Marc Guéhi can play it better than Mateo Kovacic. Guéhi, in reality a centre-back, started the season in midfield for Manchester City, ahead of Kovacic, the now-departed Nico González, and Matheus Nunes. In this context City's purchase of Enzo Fernández for a club record £125m can be seen in one of two ways: either an enormous statement of intent, or a hell of a lot of money to pay for Guéhi's understudy.

We jest, of course. Fernández is in fact a very different kind of midfielder to Guéhi, largely on the basis that he actually *is* a midfielder. Versatile, capable of recycling or progressing the ball in tight spots, driving into final-third positions as a No 8, ghosting into the penalty area and offering an advanced goal threat. Like Elliot Anderson, signed from Nottingham Forest for £116m but so long ago that in transfer window time it no longer counts, Fernández is one of the new breed of Premier League central midfielders who seems to offer everything; albeit in modest qualities, and whose primary attribute appears to be the absence of exposed risk he represents.

This is the only real way of explaining the vastly inflated fee City have paid Chelsea in a race where they were the only realistic bidder. Angelo Stiller at Stuttgart – to pluck one name out of the ether – is a similar profile of midfielder of the same age who would probably have been available at half the price, and with exactly one fewer video in which he was filmed making racist and homophobic slurs. But unlike Stiller, Fernández is battle-hardened, Premier League-proven, a known known. Whatever flaws he possesses – from his slow recovery speed to occasional fits of petulance to his intolerance – have been priced in.

And if there is any coherent theme to the 2026 summer window this is probably it: the Barclays tax, the overwhelming premium applied to players who are adjusted to the league, who have been there, done that and taken the tactical yellow card. Manchester United have added Andrey Santos, Carlos Baleba and Youri Tielemans in an otherwise quiet summer. Tottenham have maxed out the credit card to bring in Sandro Tonali (£92.5m,) and Mateus Fernandes (£85m). In which context Arsenal's purchase of Bruno Guimarães for £75m feels like a kind of weird bargain, the £4.50 pack of special offer supermarket butter.

Nevertheless, these are sums that in almost any other Premier League summer would have drawn audible gasps, that would at the very least have been attached to proven superstars. With the greatest of respect, do any of the midfielders signed by Premier League clubs this summer strike you as that level of player? Anybody who might realistically hold a candle to your Vieiras and Keanes, your Lampard and Gerrards, your De Bruynes and Kantés? Perhaps the underpinning irony of this summer is that the most expensive generation of central midfielders in Premier League history is also – in relative terms – one of its most mediocre.

Enzo is handy, Mateus has promise, Baleba has played very well for very short periods of time. But for a league that is by far the world's richest and most alluring, the absence of generational midfield talents – and particularly creative talents – is not simply an anomaly but a bug that may be progressing into a sickness.

Maresca's deployment of Guéhi, while also a kind of unsubtle message to the City board, encapsulates this. "This is a country, a league, where you need strong midfielders," he said, and by strong he meant *physical*, tenacious, good in duels, good with the shoulders and elbows. Great athletes. Capable of covering every blade of grass. The kind of thing Rodri, Bernardo Silva and Kevin De Bruyne, all in their 30s and pensioned off to slower leagues, can no longer do. A league in which running and duelling has become more important than passing.

Can they hold a candle to Vieira and Keane?

But while overt physicality is one element of the equation, it is by no means the only one. For football executives answerable to capricious owners and sensitive to public opinion, familiar players offer a kind of cherished security. Signing a known player for big money carries less reputational risk. When Arsenal blow £72m on Nicolas Pépé and it doesn't work out, that's Arsenal's fault. When City blow £100m on Jack Grealish and it doesn't work out, somehow that's Grealish's fault. So it will be with Anderson or Fernández or Morgan Rogers, none of whom are remotely *proven*, but who are at least responsible for their own failure, which in boardroom terms may as well be the same thing.

This is how you end up with a league as a kind of feedback loop, an arms race in which the aim is not simply to sign the most suitable player for an appropriate sum of money but to ride the waves of the market, a place where inefficiency and overspending are treasured as signs of ambition.

I once interviewed a youth coach with a longstanding record of producing Premier League players, who lamented to me that academies had begun to neglect technical skill in favour of producing "800-metre runners". And increasingly this feels like a kind of pivotal season for English football, a test of identities and values, a measure of what it ultimately wants to be. The fastest and the most furious, or the best and most beautiful? If Marc Guéhi ends up going for £150m when the window opens again, we'll have our answer.

County championship

Somerset steal a march on title rivals on damp, dark first day

Tanya Aldred

It was slip-catching heaven at Taunton, with **Somerset's** fielders gobbling seven in **Glamorgan's** first innings. Ben Kellaway was the only man to pass 50. Somerset's innings started under lights, but a milky sun eventually emerged to light the way and allow them to steal a march on their title rivals curtailed by rain.

Charlie Bennett's pain was Jamie Porter's gain at Chelmsford after the young seamer limped off after three overs. Porter then grabbed three for 32 for **Essex** against **Sussex**, who chose to bat and progressed in fits and starts. Sam Cook pocketed the 500th dismissal of his professional career.

At the Oval, **Yorkshire** limped along from the ignominy of one for three, which included an elegant flying catch by Ben Foakes to dismiss Will Luxton for a duck. James Wharton and Matthew Revis added 89, but Yorkshire then lost four for 21 including Jonny Bairstow, who stamped and delivered a pitch-perfect slip catch to Ollie Pope. Dan Worrall bowled beautifully for three for 24.

▲ *Jamie Porter took three wickets as Essex reduced Sussex to 213 for seven*

Hampshire were in trouble again as Rob Yates and Dan Mousley both embroidered half centuries as **Warwickshire** piled on 141 for one between the showers.

David Bedingham passed 1,000 runs for the season with an elegant fifty against **Northants**. There had been rebuilding to do after **Durham** slumped to 16 for two, a wonder ball by Luke Procter plucking out Ben McKinney's middle and off stumps and James Sales brilliantly running out Will Rhodes . Meanwhile, Division Two promotion rivals **Kent** had a so-so day against **Worcestershire**, losing five for 25 in the evening session. Daniel Bell-Drummond pinged 52.

After two months on the sidelines with a dodgy calf, Jimmy Anderson showed **Lancashire** what they'd been missing by reducing **Middlesex** to 20 for two but Luke Hollman and Leus du Plooy steadied the ship.

Gloucestershire's dismal season continued, after choosing to bat and being reduced to 62 for five against **Derbyshire**. There were two wickets for Shoaib Bashir.

Only 10.3 overs were possible at Trent Bridge, but the **Notts** captain, Haseeb Hameed, who has struggled for form this season, stroked six morale-boosting fours.

Carse left out by England again for final Test

Simon Burnton

Brydon Carse has been left out of England's squad for the final Test of the summer, against Pakistan at Edgbaston next week, with police still investigating allegations of an assault connected with the late-night incident at a Derby bar last month that led to the Durham seamer being briefly arrested and placed in handcuffs. The Cricket Regulator is also investigating the incident.

As a result of the allegations, and with investigations ongoing, Carse was dropped from the squad for last week's second Test. The 31-year-old had been in the squad for the first game, but not named in the XI. Sonny Baker, who replaced him for the second Test but also did not play, remains in a squad that has changed only by the absence of Matthew Fisher. Alongside Baker, the other squad members who were not in the team at Lord's are Shoaib Bashir, Sam Cook and Ollie Pope.

After England sealed the series win with victory at Lord's Marcus Trescothick, the interim coach, promised that "we're not going to ease off the gas" and spoke of the benefit the side's current first-choice seamers - Jofra Archer, Ollie Robinson, Josh Tongue and Gus Atkinson - would get from regularly playing together. "The more experience everyone gets together, then it sort of fits into place how you want it to be."

But if England are likely to be unchanged the same is not true of their opponents, who announced on Monday that they had sacked Sarfaraz Ahmed, their head coach, and were immediately dropping seven players. Should the final Test go to five days England will then have less than 48 hours to prepare for a white-ball series against Sri Lanka starting on 15 September. England are expected to announce their squad for the series later this week.

Third Test squad Joe Root (capt), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Sonny Baker, Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Sam Cook, Jordan Cox, Ben Duckett, Emilio Gay, Dan Lawrence, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Jamie Smith, Josh Tongue

Results and cricket scoreboard

Football

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Swansea	4	3	1	0	7	1	+6	10
QPR	4	3	1	0	7	3	+4	10
Charlton	4	3	1	0	6	3	+3	10
Wolves	4	2	1	1	11	8	+3	7
Middlesbrough	4	2	1	1	7	5	+2	7
Bristol City	4	2	1	1	7	6	+1	7
West Brom	4	2	1	1	7	6	+1	7
Birmingham	4	1	3	0	5	4	+1	6
Sheff Utd	4	1	3	0	5	4	+1	6
Millwall	4	2	0	2	6	8	-2	6
Wrexham	4	1	2	1	6	4	+2	5
West Ham	4	1	2	1	8	7	+1	5
Blackburn	4	1	2	1	5	5	0	5
Watford	4	1	2	1	4	5	-1	5
Bolton	4	1	1	2	4	5	-1	4
Derby	4	1	1	2	5	7	-2	4
Lincoln	4	1	1	2	3	5	-2	4
Southampton*	4	2	1	1	10	5	+5	3
Cardiff	4	0	3	1	6	7	-1	3
Norwich	4	1	0	3	5	7	-2	3
Portsmouth	4	1	0	3	5	8	-3	3
Stoke	4	1	0	3	4	9	-5	3
Burnley	4	0	2	2	5	10	-5	2
Preston	4	0	0	4	3	9	-6	0

*deducted four points

Burnley (0) **1** Raghouber 54
Middlesbrough (1) **1** Morris 23

Millwall (0) **0**
Wrexham (1) **3** Sturge 28og, Moore 52, Ekomié 69

QPR (1) **2** Burrell 36 53
Cardiff (0) **1** Ng 74 — 15,027

West Brom (0) **1** Styles 59
Charlton (0) **1** Campbell 69

SKY BET LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Huddersfield	4	3	1	0	9	3	+6	10
Sheff Wed	4	3	0	1	11	5	+6	9
Blackpool	4	2	1	1	8	4	+4	7
Burton	4	2	1	1	8	5	+3	7
Barnsley	4	2	1	1	5	3	+2	7
Cambridge Utd	4	2	1	1	7	6	+1	7
Luton	4	2	1	1	10	10	0	7
Leyton Orient	4	2	0	2	9	5	+4	6
Stockport	4	2	0	2	9	6	+3	6
Notts County	4	1	3	0	6	5	+1	6
Bradford	4	2	0	2	4	4	0	6
Mansfield	4	2	0	2	8	10	-2	6
Leicester	4	1	2	1	4	3	+1	5
Reading	3	1	1	1	8	4	+4	4
Oxford Utd	3	1	1	1	5	6	-1	4
Plymouth	4	1	1	2	4	6	-2	4
AFC Wimbledon	4	1	1	2	2	7	-5	4
Peterborough	4	1	1	2	2	7	-5	4
Bromley	4	1	1	2	4	13	-9	4
Doncaster	4	0	3	1	4	5	-1	3
Stevenage	4	0	3	1	4	5	-1	3
Wigan	4	1	0	3	5	7	-2	3
MK Dons	4	0	3	1	4	6	-2	3
Wycombe	4	0	2	2	4	9	-5	2

Barnsley (0) **2** McGeehan 61, Richards 87
Blackpool (0) **1** Bowler 65

Burton (2) **4** Evans 28, Smith 34og, Webster 46, Vickers 76
AFC Wimbledon (1) **1** Stockley 18 — 2,733

Luton (0) **2** Wells 50, Marshall 76
Stockport (0) **0** — 10,013

Reading (3) **5** Marriott 35 58, Ward 40, Earthy 44, Brown 80
Mansfield (0) **0** — 9,607

Wigan (1) **3** Weir 36 74, Power 48
MK Dons (0) **1** Collins 81 — 9,607

UEFA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Third round qualifying: Second leg

Real Sociedad (0) **0**
Chelsea (0) **1** Walsh 54 (agg 2-6) — 1,750

Inter 3 Wolfsburg 1 (aet; agg 3-3; Inter won 5-4 on pens); Juventus 1 St Pölten 1 (agg 4-1); Køge 1 PSV 1 (agg 2-1); OH Leuven 2 Czarni Sosnowiec 1 (agg 6-2); PSG 5 Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (aet; agg 6-2); Real Madrid 2 Ajax 1 (agg 4-1); Servette Chênois 3 Sparta Praha 0 (agg 5-3)

WILLIAM HILL SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Celtic	4	4	0	0	11	2	+9	12
St Mirren	4	3	1	0	7	3	+4	10
Motherwell	4	2	2	0	8	4	+4	8
Dundee	5	2	1	2	6	4	+2	7
Rangers	4	2	1	1	5	4	+1	7
Hearts	3	2	0	1	7	3	+4	6
Hibernian	3	2	0	1	5	4	+1	6
St Johnstone	4	1	1	2	6	7	-1	4
Dundee Utd	5	1	1	3	5	10	-5	4
Aberdeen	4	1	0	3	2	7	-5	3
Falkirk	4	0	1	3	2	6	-4	1
Kilmarnock	4	0	0	4	4	14	-10	0

Celtic (3) **3** Durán 14, Nygren 34, Yang 45+1
Aberdeen (0) **0**

Dundee (0) **1** Reilly 87
St Johnstone (0) **1** Fowler 90 — 6,104

Falkirk (1) **1** Nedeljkovic 44og
Rangers (1) **2** Shankland 8 79 — 6,847

Kilmarnock (0) **0** — 5,024
St Mirren (1) **1** Taylor 4

Motherwell (1) **3** Palmer-Houlden 19, Lowry 65, Levitt 67
Dundee United (0) **0**

Cricket

ROTHESAY COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP
Division One (first day of four)

Essex v Sussex

Chelmsford Sussex scored 213 runs for the loss of seven first-innings wickets against Essex.

Sussex First innings
DP Hughes c Walter b Snater 45
***TJ Haines** c Pepper b Cook 4
TGR Clark c Pepper b Cook 0
CJ Tear c Harmer b Porter 39
JM Coles c Pepper b Akhter 15
†JA Simpson lbw b Porter 17
JA Leaning not out 49
JJ Carson c Walter b Porter 9
DC Goodman not out 22
Extras (b4, lb9) 13
Total (for 7, 86 overs) 213

Fall 7, 7, 79, 109, 116, 149, 163. **To bat** A Karvelas, HT Crocombe. **Bowling** Cook 15-8-21-2; Snater 18-6-45-1; Bennett 3-0-10-0; Akhter 17-6-37-1; Harmer 16-2-34-0; Porter 12-1-32-3; Critchley 5-0-21-0.

Hampshire v Warwickshire

Rose Bowl Warwickshire scored 141 runs for the loss of one first-innings wicket against Hampshire.

Warwickshire First innings
RM Yates not out 59
WA Young c Brown b Currie 3
DR Mousley not out 68
Extras (lb7, nb4) 11
Total (for 1, 41 overs) 141

Fall 14.

To bat SR Hain, VL Jani, *EG Barnard, †K Smith, MJ Suthar, CR Woakes, ER Bamber, OJ Hannon-Dalby.

Bowling Abbott 9-2-20-0; Jack 8-3-20-0; Currie 10-3-23-1; Fuller 6-0-35-0; Neal 8-0-36-0.

Nottinghamshire v Leicestershire

Trent Bridge Nottinghamshire scored 42 runs for the loss of no first-innings wickets against Leicestershire.

Nottinghamshire First innings
***H Hameed** not out 32
BT Slater not out 10
Extras 0
Total (10 overs) 42

To bat FW McCann, JM Clarke, JA Haynes, †K Verreynne, LA Patterson-White, FW Sheat, OP Stone, BA Hutton, D Pennington.

Bowling Davey 5-1-26-0; Holland 5-0-16-0.

Somerset v Glamorgan

Taunton Somerset trail Glamorgan by 102 runs with 10 first-innings wickets remaining.

Glamorgan First innings
AM Tribe c Rew b Preterius 16
MS Crane c Abell b Overton 27
***KS Carlson** c Nicholls b Preterius 4
BI Kellaway c Nicholls b Preterius 51
CA Ingram c Abell b Gregory 13
SR Dickson c Overton b Gregory 9
†CB Cooke c Abell b Overton 9
DA Douthwaite c Nicholls b Lammonby 18
T van der Gugten not out 22
CPH O'Riordan c Rew b Lammonby 0
M Hamza c Rew b Leach 18
Extras (lb1, nb6) 7
Total (59 overs) 194

Fall 33, 45, 49, 80, 123, 125, 150, 158, 158.

Bowling Gregory 17-3-58-2; Overton 18-3-63-2; Preterius 16-5-45-3; Lammonby 7-0-27-2; Vaughan 0.3-0-0-0; Leach 0.2-0-0-1.

Somerset First innings
JF Thomas not out 46
TA Lammonby not out 37
Extras (lb1, nb8) 9
Total (23 overs) 92

To bat LP Goldsworthy, HM Nicholls, TB Abell, †JEK Rew, AM Vaughan, C Overton, *L Gregory, M Pretorius, MJ Leach.

Bowling Van der Gugten 7-0-24-0; Hamza 4-1-22-0; Douthwaite 4-0-17-0; Kellaway 5-0-16-0; O'Riordan 3-0-12-0.

Surrey v Yorkshire

The Oval Yorkshire scored 133 runs for the loss of seven first-innings wickets against Surrey.

Yorkshire First innings
A Lyth lbw b Fisher 1
WA Luxton c Foakes b Worrall 0
SM Whiteman lbw b Fisher 0
JH Wharton c Pope b Lawes 45
ML Revis c Chahar b Lawes 40
***†J M Bairstow** c Pope b Worrall 3
GCH Hill c Foakes b Worrall 1
DM Bess not out 21
K Yadav not out 6
Extras (b4, lb10, nb2) 16
Total (for 7, 59 overs) 133

Fall 1, 1, 1, 92, 101, 101, 113.

To bat BO Coad, CJ White.

Bowling Worrall 17-6-24-3; Fisher 15-5-42-2; Dar 11-2-25-0; Lawes 13-3-22-2; Chahar 2-0-6-0; Thomas 1-1-0-0.

Division Two (first day of four)

Gloucestershire v Derbyshire

Bristol Gloucestershire scored 62 runs for the loss of five first-innings wickets against Derbyshire.

Gloucestershire First innings
***CT Bancroft** c Andersson b Randell 6
JP Phillips c Aitchison b Randell 10
OJ Price b Aitchison 0
MAH Hammond lbw b Bashir 10
†JR Bracey not out 25
TW Boorman lbw b Bashir 0
EWO Middleton not out 8
Extras (b1, lb2) 3
Total (for 5, 31 overs) 62

Fall 15, 18, 20, 37, 37.

To bat RS Kishore, JPH Hayes, MD Taylor, WSA Williams.

Bowling Aitchison 10-2-23-1; Randell 6-3-11-2; Andersson 4-1-8-0; Bashir 9-3-14-2; Morley 2-0-3-0.

Kent v Worcestershire

Canterbury Worcestershire trail Kent by 158 runs with eight first-innings wickets remaining.

Kent First innings
BG Compton c Cullen b Taylor 8
Z Crawley c Hose b Allison 6
SA Northeast c Cullen b Finch 43
TS Muyeye c Waite b Finch 37
***DJ Bell-Drummond** lbw b Waite 52
†CG Benjamin c Cullen b Swanepoel 40
G Stewart c Cullen b Waite 19
KJ Dudgeon c Cullen b Allison 8
ME Milnes c Allison b Taylor 7
H Mahmud not out 4
MR Quinn c Swanepoel b Taylor 1
Extras (b8, lb5) 13
Total (64 overs) 238

Fall 14, 18, 100, 103, 182, 213, 220, 233, 237.

Bowling Taylor 14-1-55-3; Allison 15-4-45-2; Waite 14-2-42-2; Swanepoel 12-0-42-1; Finch 9-0-41-2.

Worcestershire First innings
DH Lategan not out 35
JD Libby b Mahmud 18
RM Edavalath lbw b Mahmud 0
AJ Hose not out 24
Extras (lb3) 3
Total (for 2, 20 overs) 80

Fall 26, 26. **To bat** *BL D'Oliveira, †HJ Cullen, MJ Waite, B Swanepoel, TAI Taylor, BMJ Allison, AW Finch.

Bowling Milnes 5-1-26-0; Mahmud 7-3-29-2; Quinn 5-3-10-0; Dudgeon 3-0-12-0.

Middlesex v Lancashire

Northwood Middlesex scored 139 runs for the loss of three first-innings wickets against Lancashire.

Middlesex First innings
SD Robson b Anderson 8
LBK Hollman not out 54
MDE Holden b Anderson 0
***JL du Plooy** c Jennings b Balderson 41
BBA Geddes not out 23
Extras (b5, lb6, nb2) 13
Total (for 3, 39 overs) 139

Fall 20, 20, 92. **To bat** RF Higgins, †HG Duke, ZG Khan, TS Roland-Jones, TG Helm, N Sharma.

Bowling Anderson 10-4-30-2; Bailey 13-2-45-0; Balderson 10-2-26-1; Walkden 6-0-27-0.

Northamptonshire v Durham

Northampton Durham scored 129 runs for the loss of three first-innings wickets against Northamptonshire.

Durham First innings
***AZ Lees** lbw b Chahal 24
BS McKinney b Procter 4
WMH Rhodes run out (Sales) 1
DG Bedingham not out 57
MA Agarwal not out 25
Extras (b5, lb7, nb6) 18
Total (for 3, 30 overs) 129

Fall 14, 16, 75. **To bat** BA Stokes, CN Ackermann, †OG Robinson, KL Aldridge, MJ Potts, CF Parkinson.

Bowling Sanderson 6-0-33-0; Procter 5-1-10-1; Sales 2-0-16-0; Chahal 9-2-23-1; McSweeney 2-0-3-0; Harrison 6-1-32-0.

Tennis

US OPEN (Flushing Meadows, New York)

Men: Singles: Firsr round: B van de Zandschulp (Neth) bt J Choinski (GB) 6-3 6-1 7-6 (5); **Bu Y** (Chn) bt R JODAR (Sp, 12) 6-2 6-1 6-1; **Z Svajda** (US) bt D Altmaier (Ger) 6-3 6-1 6-7 (5) 6-2; **A DE MINAUR** (Aus, 6) bt A Guerrieri (It) 6-2 6-2 6-4; **M Zheng** (US) bt F Marozsan (Hun) 6-4 6-4 6-2; **I BUSE** (Per, 32) bt M Giron (US) 3-6 6-3 6-3 6-7 (6) 6-1; **J de Jong** (Neth) bt F Passaro (It) 2-6 6-2 4-6 6-3 6-2

Second round: A Michelsen (US) bt B NAKASHIMA (US, 16) 6-3 6-4 6-4; **D MEDVEDEV** (Rus, 7) bt S Gorzny (US) 6-1 6-3 7-5; **D Merida** (Sp) bt A RUBLEV (Rus, 23) 6-7 (3) 6-2 6-4 6-4; **A RINDERKENCH** (Fr, 26) bt J Munar (Sp) 7-6 (4) 6-2 7-5; **B SHELTON** (US, 8) bt H Hurkacz (Pol) 6-3 5-7 7-6 (3) 7-5; **TM ETCHEVERRY** (Arg, 27) bt J Fearnley (GB) 6-3 6-3 3-6 6-3

Women: Singles: First round: F Jones (GB) bt M Linette (Pol) 6-4 1-6 6-3

Second round: T Townsend (US) bt T Preston (Aus) 6-1 6-1; **J PAOLINI** (It, 19) bt L Stefanini (It) 6-4 6-1; **L FERNANDEZ** (Can, 31) bt M Sawangkaew (Tha) 6-4 6-1; **D SHNAIDER** (Rus, 15) bt K Pliskova (Cz) 6-1 7-6 (4); **J PEGULA** (US, 3) bt S Kenin (US) 6-3 6-1; **S CIRSTEA** (Rom, 16) bt D Parry (Fr) 6-2 7-5; **M KOSTYUK** (Ukr, 11) bt S Stephens (US) 6-1 7-5; **K MUCHOVA** (Cz, 7) bt K Boulter (GB) 6-1 6-0; **K Rakhimova** (Rus) bt O Selekhmeteva (Rus) 6-3 6-0; **E NAVARRO** (US, 26) bt C McNally (US) 3-6 6-2 6-3; **T Maria** (Ger) bt J OSTAPENKO (Lat, 30) 4-6 6-1 6-2

Cycling

VUELTA A ESPAÑA (Spain)

Stage 11 Cartagena - Lorca (151.3km): **1** M Brennan (GB) Visma | Lease a Bike 3hr 17min 18sec; **2** B Coquard (Fr) Cofidis; **3** J Meeus (Bel) Red Bull-BORA-Hansgrohe.

Selected others: 39 F Pickering (GB) Jayco-AlUla

Overall standings: 1 E Mas (Sp) Movistar 35hr 59min 02sec; **2** P Roglic (Svn) Red Bull-BORA-Hansgrohe +1:18; **3** F Gall (Aut) Decathlon CMA CGM 1:39.

Selected others: 4 O Onley (GB) Netcompany Ineos +2:20; **20** F Pickering (GB) Jayco-AlUla +24:43

Fixtures

Football
William Hill Scottish Premiership
Hibernian v Hearts (7.45pm)
Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Bradford v Castleford (8pm)
Cricket (10.30am unless stated)
Second Women's One-Day International
England v Ireland, Derby (1pm)
Metro Bank One-Day Cup Women
Durham v Hampshire, Riverside; Lancs v Surrey, Preston; Warks v Essex, Edgbaston; Yorks v Somerset, Headingley

Greg Wood's racing tips

Haydock 1.30 Star Start **2.05** Burning Up **2.40** Flying Pirate **3.17** Green Titan **3.52** Does Mary Know **4.25** Polygram **5.00** Storm Point
Newcastle 1.42 Satyress **2.17** Junkyard Dog **2.52** Interstate **3.24** Home Secretary **3.59** Mussab **4.35** Victory Sound **5.10** Asadjumeirah **5.40** Tomorrow Day **6.15** Harb
Salisbury 1.53 Prince Rasm **2.28** Night Star **3.03** Hereward **3.39** Miss Miniver **4.14** Miss Kodi (nb) **4.49** Zen Diva **5.24** Boyfriend **5.55** Aleatrix
Lingfield 3.10 Princess Honey Bee **3.45** Twilight Moon **4.20** Diomed Duke **4.55** Kamaal **5.30** Fabled Spirit **6.00** Angels' Share **6.30** Acclaimed Freedom **7.00** Lady Of Clover
Southwell 4.30 Invincible Crown **5.05** Black Orchid **5.35** Grand Pier **6.10** Castlemont **6.40** The Third Star **7.10** Franschhoek **7.40** Indefensible **8.10** Modern Times (nap)

In World Golf
Woods given five-year driving ban after Florida crash *Page 29* →

Cycling

Brennan seals stage-win treble on his Vuelta debut

Matthew Brennan triumphed again in the Vuelta a España yesterday, becoming the first cyclist to win three stages in his first Grand Tour since Tadej Pogacar seven years ago. The British rider secured his third victory on the 11th stage, a mostly flat route of 153.8km from Cartagena to Lorca.

"We took the initiative today again," Brennan said. "The boys pulled as hard as they could even after a tough day in the legs yesterday. We still went full gas. Coming into the final, we really held our own place and knew that we were all strong enough to kind of get to where we want to be."

The 21-year-old of team Visma-Lease a Bike also won the second and fifth stages to become the youngest cyclist with multiple stage wins in the Vuelta since Pogacar's three victories in 2019.

"It's massive [to have won three stages]," Brennan said. "I'm with a team full of massive champions. We've got guys who have podiumed in Grand Tours and won them as well, and guys who've won classics and huge races. And the fact they go for me is an amazing opportunity. I'm really thankful that they go full gas for me."

A sprinter had not claimed at least three victories in his maiden Grand Tour since Fernando Gaviria in the Giro d'Italia in 2017. Pogacar also had already won three stages in this year's Vuelta before a crash forced him to withdraw on Saturday while holding a big overall lead. He fractured his left collarbone and could not continue on his quest for a career sweep of the three Grand Tours.

Enric Mas, from Movistar Team, took the overall lead from Pogacar and has kept it since. He is 1min 18sec ahead of Primoz Roglic, from team Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe. Roglic is chasing a record fifth Vuelta title.

Today, riders will face a 12th stage featuring a tough mountain route. It includes a traditional double climb at Velefique and Calar Alto, marking an important day for the riders fighting for the general classification.

Britain's Lewis Askey, meanwhile, won the opening stage of the Tour of Britain, the NSN rider attacking on the cobbles of the Michaelgate climb in Lincoln and riding clear to victory. The Italian Filippo Ganna of Netcompany Ineos came home second, two seconds down, while the Belgian Tim Wellens of UAE Team Emirates-XRG was third. **Agencies**

▲ *Matthew Brennan of team Visma-Lease a Bike after winning stage 11*

▲ *Katie Boulter failed to hold serve once as she lost 6-1, 6-0 to Karolina Muchova*
AMBER SEARLS/ IMAGN IMAGES/ REUTERS

Sorry Boulter outclassed after brutal lesson from Muchova

Tumaini Carayol
Flushing Meadows

With the grounds of the Billie Jean King National Tennis Centre at a standstill in the middle of a furious downpour and all eyes on the only two stadium courts under retractable roofs, there was nowhere for Katie Boulter to hide as her grand slam season came to a bitter end with an excruciating 6-1, 6-0 beating by the seventh seed, Karolina Muchova, in the second round of the US Open.

Boulter and Muchova had initially been scheduled to compete on Court 17 after the men's first round match between the rising star Rafael Jodar and Yunchaokete Bu, but as heavy rain suspended play Boulter and Muchova were quickly moved to Louis Armstrong Stadium. She was completely outclassed by a sublime Muchova, who employed her usual brand of silky shotmaking and all-court tennis.

Afterwards Boulter said she had struggled to adjust to her unexpected new environment, and particularly the ambient noise from the distracted, chatty crowd, something the US Open has become notorious for. "She was better than me today for sure," she said. "I think I'm probably struggling to be kind to myself, but I'm going to be right now. I struggled with the conditions. I struggled with the roof, I struggled with the noise. I kind of let these little things distract me a little bit. But ultimately, at the end of the day, it was a bad day at the office."

This has been a life-changing summer for Boulter, who married the men's player Alex de Minaur in July. However after a promising start to the season in which she won her fourth WTA title, in Ostrava, and returned to the top 60 after her brilliant victory over the world No 2, Elena Rybakina at Queen's, things have stalled. Until her first round win in Cincinnati last month, she had lost five consecutive matches, including a painful straight-sets loss in the first round of Wimbledon. Confidence has been hard to come by.

This was the first time that Boulter has competed on one of the stadium courts in New York and she had only trained on Louis Armstrong Stadium once. She said the atmosphere took her by surprise: "I think a lot of the times in matches when you warm up, it's quite noisy.

"I actually expected it to kind of die down a little bit, but it didn't. I think from the first point of the match I was expecting the crowd to go silent, which is normally how it works. But it never changed. So I think in my mind I was like, 'Okay, so you need to adjust here. You need to be ready. You need to work it out as we go along.' And I think that was my plan.

"I always want to have an atmosphere. I always want to have noise. I love that. I normally relish that feeling. So for me today it's a very different feeling to feel slightly distracted from that. It was a little abnormal for me."

As Boulter tried to start the process of digesting such a tough defeat, the British qualifier Francesca Jones took a significant step forward as she defeated the former top 20 player Magda Linette 6-4, 1-6, 6-3 to reach the second round of the US Open for the first time.

▲ *Qualifier Francesca Jones went the distance to make the second round*

It took a considerable amount of concentration and resilience for Jones to find a way through one of the most turbulent matches. She had played brilliantly on Tuesday to take the first set before rain forced the suspension of play for the rest of the night.

After again being forced off court due to rain right after their warmup yesterday, Jones had to claw her way back into the match after a brilliant start to the second set from Linette: "It was incredible how she was playing until about 4-0 and then started to equal out. But, you know, in that situation, hats off if they can maintain that. I just tried to show my northern grit, stick in there and do what I can," she said.

This has been a gruelling year for Jones, who after breaking into the top 100 last year spent much of this season sidelined with various injuries and a freak concussion.

Elsewhere, Britain's Jan Choinski fell 6-3, 6-1, 7-6(5) to Botic van de Zandschulp, and Jacob Fearnley, a lucky loser, was defeated 6-3, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 by the 27th seed, Tomas Etcheverry. The big shock came on Court 17 as the 19-year-old Jodar, one of the most talked about players in the buildup to the tournament, was demolished 6-2, 6-1, 6-1 by Bu.

Rugby union

Itoje bounces back as evangelist of rest after 'weird' summer break

Robert Kitson

Maro Itoje says it felt "very weird" watching England play from afar this summer but he believes more top players should consider taking a break to prolong their careers. The British & Irish Lions captain was rested for his country's three Nations Championship games in July and is now feeling the benefits of "taking a breath" after an intense year on and off the field.

In addition to the burden of leadership for club and country, Itoje also lost his mother last year and, with the 2027 World Cup looming, the national coach, Steve Borthwick, offered his captain the chance of a mini-sabbatical. He has emerged fit, healthy and mentally rested for the season ahead having enjoyed his first full club pre-season at Saracens since 2014.

"I don't regret it at all," Itoje said at the Prem media launch at Twickenham. "In some respects it was a little bit weird being away from the team, especially whilst games were going on. But at the same time I felt like it was the right thing to do. Mentally it was a busy year, both personally and professionally, so it was nice to have a bit of time to take a breath."

▲ *Maro Itoje has enjoyed his first full pre-season with Saracens since 2014*

> ***'For players at the top of the game, this proactive approach works'***
>
> **Maro Itoje**
> *England captain*

Coincidentally, Itoje bumped into the England squad at Heathrow airport on the day they were returning from the South African leg of their tour but otherwise he did his best to keep his distance, even choosing not to watch the games live to avoid getting too emotionally involved. "When you watch a game live, you're in every nook and cranny, every tackle. But that also probably has a hidden emotional kind of weight. I felt it would have defeated the purpose of what I was trying to achieve."

Itoje, who turns 32 next month, would certainly recommend a break to other leading players as and when the chance arises, with South Africa and New Zealand having long since pursued a policy of allowing their top stars to sign contracts in Japan. "It is very much case by case but I think that, for players who have the blessing to be at the top of the game for a period of time, a proactive approach like this one works.

"I was taken aback initially because it just never entered my mind. It was never something that I thought was an option … I kind of had it in my mind that 'this is the way the cookie crumbles' and you just have to power through. [But] the more I thought about it, the more I kind of agreed with it. If I was not going to do it then I'm not sure when the next window would have been."

The next challenge is to hit the ground running when the Prem season kicks off this month before a busy November. England are scheduled to play four Tests on successive weekends, starting with a game against Australia on 8 November, and a refreshed Itoje will be keen to make an immediate impact.

"I hope the break is giving me what's necessary for me to come back better. Since I've been involved with England, I've pretty much been involved in every campaign. Saracens for a large period of that time were the top team in Europe, so we're going deep into Europe and deep in the Premiership. And that has also helped with Lions tours and selections.

"I've been very fortunate to have had what I've had but the cost of that, I guess, is that you don't tend to have a break. Apart from missing training today, I've had a full pre-season [with Saracens] to work on myself and my body and be around the team, and I think that's been a good thing."

Itoje will soon have added responsibilities on his plate with his wife, Mimi, who is pregnant with the couple's first child – but on the England front he says he was encouraged by what he saw towards the end of England's summer Tests under the leadership of his Saracens teammate Jamie George. "I was delighted with the last two results," he said.

"Obviously the Fiji game was a big win and in the Argentina game they showed a lot of character away from home. The challenge and opportunity for us now is to build on that."

Northampton seek 'happy medium' in Pollock talks

Gerard Meagher

The Northampton director of rugby, Phil Dowson, has said the club "have got to find a happy medium" in contract talks with Henry Pollock after the player's representative, Eddie Hearn, suggested he should be earning £1m a year.

Pollock is said to earn around £150,000 a season and his current deal expires at the end of the 2026-27 campaign. Hearn has stated Pollock could earn "10 times" that if he were to move to another club, warning "he can't stay at the club on the money he's on".

The 21-year-old has 13 England caps but has made only one start. Hearn says his commercial profile warrants a seven-figure salary. Pollock is among the 25 England players to receive an enhanced contract worth £150,000 and Dowson expressed confidence the Prem champions can keep hold of him.

He said: "It is going well. We are still pushing it through. What Eddie Hearn also said, and people have gone straight to the million-pound remark, but the other thing he said is that Henry wants to win stuff, Henry wants to stay at Saints, Henry wants to play with that group of players. He wants to win the World Cup. I embrace that. I am all for that. The appetite is for him to stay. Now we've got to find a happy medium. We really want to keep him, he really wants to stay, and that's a great start.

▲ *Henry Pollock should be earning £1m a year according to Eddie Hearn*

"We still have to make decisions based on our budget and our financial situation. We'll continue to do that in the best way possible."

Salary cap constraints mean Pollock's chances of receiving a seven-figure offer are slim, not least because Northampton's self-imposed budget is significantly less than the cap's ceiling.

Dowson added: "My job is to try and fit 57, 58 players within a squad on a budget. I'll continue to do that. Eddie Hearn is great for the game, we want to keep Henry Pollock. Fundamentally, nothing has changed. What he says is based on his job.

"Eddie Hearn has a job to do, and that is to promote his client and ask for more money for his client. He's doing both of those very effectively. We've said we want to publicise and grow the game and he has the ability to do that."

Football *Women's Champions League*

Walsh caps Chelsea's progress despite resistance from hosts

Real Sociedad	**0**
Chelsea	**1**
Walsh 54	

Chelsea win 6-2 on agg.

Suzanne Wrack

Chelsea ensured there will be three Women's Super League teams in the league phase of the Champions League as Keira Walsh's second-half strike against Real Sociedad extended their three-goal margin from the first leg of the third-round qualifier.

A 5-2 win gave Sonia Bompastor's side a commanding lead in the tie, after a rusty start had forced them to come from a goal down. It wasn't pretty, though, and that continued into the second leg.

There were only two changes for the home team. The change that mattered most, though, was the one that had taken place in the dugout. In between these two critical Champions League qualifying games, Arturo Ruiz, the Real Sociedad manager, exited and was unveiled as the new Brighton manager following the shock departure of Dario Vidosic. If Vidosic's exit had been a surprise, Brighton poaching Ruiz was a bigger one. Gorka Álvarez was hurriedly brought in to lead *La Real* in their Liga F opener against Logroño on Saturday, a 2-0 loss, and the second leg against Chelsea.

It was a mountain of a task facing the 40-year-old and, in many respects, a bit of a free hit, with few expecting Real Sociedad to come close to overturning a three-goal deficit against European heavyweights.

However, setting the tone for his tenure was important. *La Real* did well against the visitors, holding Bompastor's side at bay until Walsh swept in from a corner in the 54th minute to kill any outlandish hopes there may have been of a comeback.

Until then, the London side struggled to create clear chances with *La Real* mirroring their well-organised display in the first half of the first leg.

Ellie Carpenter was Chelsea's best outlet but they couldn't capitalise on her balls into the middle. Walsh's side-footed effort in the first half was weak and easy for the goalkeeper Julia Arrula. Aggie Beever-Jones had a good chance to break the deadlock moments before Walsh's goal but the forward's strike was too central.

Perfectionist that Bompastor is, she will be unhappy with the nature of the two games, but the reality is that reaching the league phase, for a team desperately wanting European glory, was what mattered. In the end the result was comfortable, even if the performance wasn't.

▲ *Chelsea players gather in a huddle after Keira Walsh's second-half goal*

Football In brief

Tottenham

Trabzonspor keen on bringing in Richarlison

Richarlison is the subject of interest from Trabzonspor and could move there from Tottenham before the closure of the Turkish transfer window tomorrow. The striker has asked to leave, according to the Spurs manager, Roberto De Zerbi, and it looked as if he might return to Everton as Spurs tried to sign Iliman Ndiaye – only for Ndiaye to join Manchester City. Richarlison took to social media on Monday to say that he would not be forced into a move he did not want. He appears to want Trabzonspor and is understood to have agreed personal terms. The 29-year-old would join Mohamed Salah at the club. **David Hytner**

▲ *Richarlison could move before tomorrow's deadline in Turkey*

Crystal Palace

Sarr's agent hits out at treatment of Africans

Ismaïla Sarr's agent has claimed some African players are treated like "a commodity" after Crystal Palace turned down Liverpool's approach for the Senegal forward and Lamine Camara's move from Monaco to Chelsea broke down. Palace are understood to have rejected a bid from Liverpool for Sarr last week and insisted he was not for sale. The 28-year-old subsequently deleted all references to Palace from his social media accounts. Sarr's agent, Diomansy Kamara, released a statement yesterday saying: "We have to get out of this logic where the African player can sometimes give the feeling that he is just a commodity: you buy it, you set its price, you negotiate its future and, too often, your will seems to go to the background. Our African players deserve respect." **Ed Aarons**

Transfer verdict

How top-flight clubs fared in a wild window

Arsenal

Bringing in Christos Tzolis, Bruno Guimarães and Ezri Konsa was a strong start to the window but could Arsenal's failure to sign a marquee attacker cost them in the long run? They began targeting Morgan Rogers before pivoting to Vinícius Júnior when the England forward went to Chelsea, only to end up disappointed when Vinícius signed a new deal with Real Madrid. Julián Alvarez made clear he had no intention of joining from Atlético Madrid and Arsenal kept their powder dry despite sanctioning the exits of Gabriel Jesus to Barcelona and Ethan Nwaneri to Borussia Dortmund. Should Gabriel Martinelli complete his move to Al-Hilal as expected – the Saudi Pro League window remains open – a few injuries could leave Mikel Arteta short. **Ed Aarons**

Key ins: Bruno Guimarães (Newcastle, £75m), Ezri Konsa (Aston Villa, £51m), Piero Hincapié (Bayer Leverkusen, £45m), Christos Tzolis (Club Brugge, £34m)
Key outs: Leandro Trossard (Besiktas, £15.3m), Jakub Kiwior (Porto, £14.5m), Gabriel Jesus (Barcelona, £8.6m), Fábio Vieira (Hamburg, £7.7m), Christian Nørgaard (Everton, £7m), Ethan Nwaneri (Borussia Dortmund, loan)

Aston Villa

Unai Emery has made clear there is no such thing as a transition season in his eyes. Villa have generated about £300m from the sales of nine players and brought in 10 at a cost of about £250m. Villa have lowered their wage bill and changed the profile of their squad. Zion Suzuki, Ibrahim Mbaye and Johan Manzambi are exciting signings. Last summer there was concern Villa had gone stale and they ended up fretting on deadline day – Harvey Elliott and Jadon Sancho joined on loan – but there was no such chaos this time. **Ben Fisher**

Key ins: Johan Manzambi (Freiburg, £51m), Nicolas Jackson (Chelsea, £47.5m), Ibrahim Mbaye (PSG, £47m), João Gomes (Wolves, £34m), Zion Suzuki (Parma, £30m), Taylor Harwood-Bellis (Southampton, £25m), Matteo Ruggeri (Atlético Madrid, £21.4m), Leon Goretzka (Bayern Munich, free), Aaron Wan-Bissaka (West Ham, loan), Alejandro Garnacho (Chelsea, loan)
Key outs: Morgan Rogers (Chelsea, £117m), Ollie Watkins (Al-Hilal, £51m), Ezri Konsa (Arsenal, £51m), Youri Tielemans (Manchester United, £35m), Donyell Malen (Roma, £21.6m), Lewis Dobbin (Southampton, £9m), Lucas Digne (PSG, £8.5m), Emiliano Martínez (Chelsea, £7.5m), Evann Guessand (Crystal Palace, loan)

Bournemouth

Perhaps Bournemouth's best business was keeping hold of their coveted key players, chiefly Eli Junior Kroupi, Rayan, Alex Scott and Tyler Adams. Bournemouth rejected bids from Chelsea for Scott to give Marco Rose the best chance of succeeding, with the club attempting to juggle European competition and the league for the first time. The arrival of the centre-back António Silva, 22, from Benfica looks a smart replacement for Marcos Senesi, 29. **BF**

Key ins: António Silva (Benfica, £21.4m), Álvaro Rodríguez (Elche, £21.3m), Juanlu Sánchez (Sevilla, £11.1m), Michele Di Gregorio (Juventus, loan)
Key outs: Luis Sinisterra (Cruzeiro, £5.2m), Enes Unal (Getafe, free), Álex Jiménez (Fiorentina, loan), Marcos Senesi (Tottenham, free)

Brentford

Avoiding a repeat of last year's upheaval was a major boost. Keith Andrews held on to his best players and made smart additions. Mamadou Sangaré has added quality in midfield since joining from Lens and looks the bargain of the summer. Callum Wilson has brought experience up front after signing on a free and Jaidon Anthony provides cover on the flanks after his move from Burnley. El Hadji-Malick Diouf, signed from West Ham, offers potential at left-back. **Jacob Steinberg**

Key ins: Mamadou Sangaré (Lens, £39m), El Hadji Malick Diouf (West Ham, £35m), Jaidon Anthony (Burnley, £15m), Jannik Schuster (Red Bull Salzburg, £14m), Callum Wilson (West Ham, free)
Key outs: Ethan Pinnock (Coventry, £6m), Jordan Henderson (Chelsea, free)

Brighton

Deadline day deals to bring in the Nigeria forward Femi Azeez from Millwall and Spanish midfielder Chema Andrés from Stuttgart made it 12 signings in another summer of transition. The departures of Jan Paul van Hecke, Carlos Baleba and Carl Rushworth brought in more than £140m as the Brighton model continues to deliver big profits, although selling Danny Welbeck to Chelsea for £5m may be the biggest loss if the new striker Promise David cannot bring the goals. **EA**

Key ins: Luka Vuskovic (Tottenham, £46m), Zadok Yohanna (AIK, £21.5m), Chema Andrés (Stuttgart, £18.9m), Pascal Struijk (Leeds, £18m), Femi Azeez (Millwall, undisc), Jaouen Hadjam (Young Boys, £11.1m), Costinha (Olympiakos, £11m), Michael Svoboda (Venezia, £4.3m), Promise David (Union St-Gilloise, loan)

▲ *Brentford's Mamadou Sangaré could be the signing of the summer*

Key outs: Carlos Baleba (Manchester United, £70m), Jan Paul van Hecke (Tottenham, £52m), Carl Rushworth (Coventry, £22.5m), Diego Coppola (Paris FC, £15.3m), Danny Welbeck (Chelsea, £5m), Joël Veltman (West Ham, free), James Milner (retired), Solly March (released)

Chelsea

Xabi Alonso's appointment as manager was the biggest signing of the summer. Morgan Rogers has started well after joining for £117m. Maxence Lacroix adds power in defence, Marco Palestra versatility on the flanks. Danny Welbeck and Jordan Henderson can raise standards in the dressing room. But there was the usual revolving door. Money was made on a host of outgoings. Marc Cucurella, one of the world's best left-backs and sold to Real Madrid, looks a bigger loss than Enzo Fernández. However a worry is that Chelsea did not replace Fernández, their late £47m move for Monaco's Lamine Camara collapsing at the last. **JS**

Key ins: Morgan Rogers (Aston Villa, £117m), Maxence Lacroix (Crystal Palace, £52m), Marco Palestra (Atalanta, £47m), Geovany Quenda (Sporting, £40m), Valentín Barco (Strasbourg, £34m), Emmanuel Emegha (Strasbourg, £21.6m), Pep Chavarría (Rayo Vallecano, £16.3m), Emiliano Martínez (Aston Villa, £7.5m), Danny Welbeck (Brighton, £5m), Jordan Henderson (Brentford, free)
Key outs: Enzo Fernández (Manchester City, £125m), Marc Cucurella (Real Madrid, £52m), Andrey Santos (Manchester United, £50m), Nicolas Jackson (Aston Villa, £47.5m), Liam Delap (Nottingham Forest, £45m), Trevoh Chalobah (Como 1907, £25.7m), Tyrique George (Everton, £18m), Marc Guiu (RB Leipzig, £14.5m), Tosin Adarabioyo (Tottenham, £7m), Axel Disasi (Crystal Palace, loan), Alejandro Garnacho (Aston Villa, loan), Benoît Badiashile (Napoli, loan), Robert Sánchez (Como, loan), Mykhailo Mudryk (Tottenham, loan)

Coventry

It remains to be seen whether Coventry have struck the right balance in the market. Frank Lampard wanted to maintain momentum but add power and physicality. Coventry also sought to address their lack of Premier League experience with Taiwo Awoniyi and Ethan Pinnock. Coventry were the highest scorers in English football's top four tiers last season but the step up means the pressure is on Awoniyi, never prolific for Nottingham Forest, Sidiki Cherif, a promising 19-year-old, and Ellis Simms to deliver before Haji Wright returns from injury. **BF**

Key ins: Caleb Yirenkyi (Nordsjælland, £23m), Carl Rushworth (Brighton, £22.5m), Sidiki Cherif (Fenerbahce, £20.5m), Loum Tchaouna (Burnley, £20m), Aurèle Amenda (Eintracht Frankfurt, £15.4m), Taiwo Awoniyi (Nottingham Forest, £9m), Ethan Pinnock (Brentford, £6m), Gustavo Hamer (Sheffield United, £6m), Stephen Mfuni (Manchester City, loan), Frank Onyeka (Brentford, undisc), Dan Bentley (Wolves, undisc)
Key outs: None

Crystal Palace

The lost tug of war with Sunderland over Malick Fofana summed up another chaotic deadline day for Palace, who were still scrambling for signings in the final minutes and confirmed the arrivals of Ben Chilwell, Quinten Timber and Darío Osorio after the window shut. The new manager, Pierre Sage, will be pleased to have secured more defensive reinforcements after losing Maxence Lacroix to Chelsea, with the loanees Honest Ahanor and Axel Disasi adding depth. Palace also kept hold of Ismaïla Sarr – presuming he doesn't join a club in Saudi Arabia before the Sunday deadline there – after rejecting an approach from Liverpool. **EA**

Key ins: Anan Khalaili (Union St-Gilloise, £21m), Quinten Timber (Marseille, £15m), Zavier Gozo (Real Salt Lake, £11m), Axel Disasi (Chelsea, loan), Evann Guessand (Aston Villa, loan), Honest Ahanor (Atalanta, loan), Darío Osorio (Midtjylland, loan), Dwight McNeil (Everton, swap), Takehiro Tomiyasu (Ajax, free), Óscar Mingueza (Celta Vigo, free), Ben Chilwell (Strasbourg, undisc fee)

▼ *Christos Tzolis has impressed since moving to Arsenal from Club Brugge*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Key outs: Maxence Lacroix (Chelsea, £52m), Daniel Muñoz (Nottingham Forest, £22m), Brennan Johnson (Everton, swap), Borna Sosa (Cologne, loan)

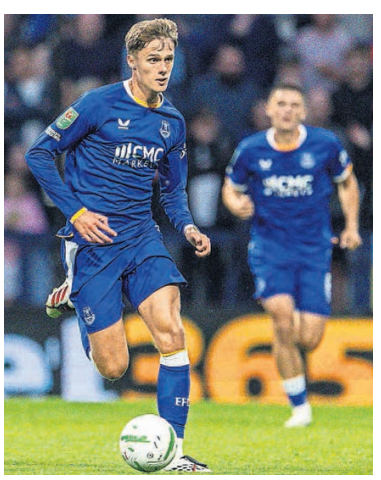
Everton

It was a window that revealed the extent of The Friedkin Group's ambitions, the strength of the club's finances after the move to a new stadium, the state of the relationship between the manager and chief executive and the expertise of the senior leadership team; and none of it was positive. The owners deserve some credit for listening to fans and halting the sale of Harrison Armstrong to Nottingham Forest but otherwise it was a modest window that descended into a shambles. The club's best player, Iliman Ndiaye, was sold for a below-market fee, a move for Folarin Balogun collapsed and although the desperate search for a right-back ended with Ainsley Maitland-Niles signing, David Moyes was left with one striker and a smaller squad than he started the day with. **AH**

Key ins: Tyrique George (Chelsea, £18m), Merlin Röhl (Freiburg, £17.3m), Hayden Hackney (Middlesbrough, £16.5m), Christian Nørgaard (Arsenal, £7m), Ainsley Maitland-Niles (Lyon, £4.2m), Brennan Johnson (Crystal Palace, swap), Jack Grealish (Manchester City, loan)
Key outs: Iliman Ndiaye (Manchester City, £60m), Beto (Fiorentina, £15.4m), Tim Iroegbunam (Hull, £13m), Dwight McNeil (Crystal Palace, swap), Idrissa Gueye (Al-Diriyah, free), Nathan Patterson (Torino, free), Séamus Coleman (released)

Fulham

It was a summer of change at Craven Cottage. Marco Silva departed after five years in charge and was replaced by Álvaro Arbeloa, who has focused on adding youth. Gonzalo García, César Palacios and Manuel Ángel followed Arbeloa from Real Madrid and Shea Charles is an exciting signing from Southampton. Some stalwarts have left. Raúl Jiménez joined Wolves and Harry Wilson went to Leeds. Fulham looked to strengthen. They secured the midfielder Hugo Larsson and the centre-back David Affengruber on deadline day. **JS**



▲ *Harrison Armstrong will stay at Everton despite interest from Forest*

Key ins: Gonzalo García (Real Madrid, £34.3m), Shea Charles (Southampton, £30m), David Affengruber (Elche, £10.3m), César Palacios (Real Madrid, £8.6m), Jonah Kusi-Asare (Bayern Munich, £5.2m), Manuel Ángel (Real Madrid, £3.4m), Hugo Larsson (Eintracht Frankfurt, loan)
Key outs: Sasa Lukic (Ipswich, £9m), Issa Diop (Ipswich, £8.5m), Harry Wilson (Leeds, free), Raúl Jiménez (Wolves, free)

Hull

"Think of us like a volcano," said Hull's owner, Acun Ilicali, in early July. "It's boiling right now and it's going to erupt." Two months on Ilicali has presided over 18 signings, investing more than £150m and his manager, Sergej Jakirovic, has choreographed two Premier League wins. The horizon looks brighter than in June, when the playoff winners sold two players for a combined £8.5m to avoid breaching English Football League spending rules and a near-certain six-point deduction. Hull, remember, spent last season under a two-window EFL transfer embargo. Last season's cult hero loanee forward Joe Gelhardt has signed permanently from Leeds. **Louise Taylor**

Key ins: Nobel Mendy (Rayo Vallecano, £20m), Konstantinos Tzolakis (Olympiakos, £20m), Lucas Herrington (Colorado Rapids, £17.1m), Ilyas Ansah (Union Berlin, £14.5m), Mohamed-Ali Cho (Nice, £13m), Brooke Norton-Cuffy (Genoa, £12m), Jens Hjertø-Dahl (Tromsø, £10m), Tim Iroegbunam (Everton, £13m), Christos Mouzakitis (Olympiakos, £12.9m), Sorba Thomas (Stoke, £7.5m), Joe Gelhardt (Leeds, £6.5m), Jack Butland (Rangers, £3.5m), Lucas Gourna-Douath (Red Bull Salzburg, £3.4m), Elliot Stroud (Mjällby, £3m), Robinio Vaz (Roma, loan), Hidemasa Morita (Sporting, free), Matt Targett (Newcastle, free), Óscar Zambrano (Maribor, undisc fee)
Key outs: Ivor Pandur (Rangers, £6m), Cody Drameh (Genoa, £3.9m), Abu Kamara (Portsmouth, £2.5m), Kyle Joseph (Middlesbrough, undisc fee)

Ipswich

The late addition of striker Zian Flemming brought Ipswich's summer spending close to £200m. Arrivals such as Exequiel Palacios and Julio Enciso should have no business in the lower reaches, and the former Fulham pair Sasa Lukic and Issa Diop add crucial experience. Gary O'Neil can call upon enviable depth in midfield and speed on the flanks, where Abdul Fatawu and Daizen Maeda look sharp. But time will tell whether Ipswich have strengthened their defence sufficiently. **Nick Ames**

Key ins: Julio Enciso (Strasbourg, £26m), Emersonn (Toulouse, £24m), Exequiel Palacios (Bayer Leverkusen, £23.5m), Zian Flemming (Burnley, £20m), Abdul Fatawu (Leicester, £20m), Abdoul Ouattara (Strasbourg, £17m), Florentino Luís (Burnley, £16m), Daizen Maeda (Celtic, £10m), Sasa Lukic (Fulham, £9m), Kjell Scherpen (Union St-Gilloise, £8.6m), Issa Diop (Fulham, £8.5m), Chuba Akpom (Ajax, £7m), Kayne van Oevelen (Volendam, £3.4m), Cédric Kipré (Reims, £1.7m)
Key outs: George Hirst (Stoke, £6m), Arijanet Muric (Sassuolo, £6m), Harry Clarke (Preston, £3.5m)

Leeds

In an ideal world Daniel Farke might have wished for one more high-calibre attacking recruit but that should not detract from a decent window, featuring seven sensible signings. The importance of the acquisition of the England goalkeeper James Trafford from Manchester City should not be underestimated. Trafford will certainly provide Leeds with a few more extra points – not to mention enhance their play courtesy of his stellar footwork. Tarik Muharemovic looks an outstanding defensive buy. Harry Wilson raises creativity levels and the attacking tone. **LT**

Key ins: James Trafford (Manchester City, £40.5m), Tarik Muharemovic (Sassuolo, £34.1m), Nico Elvedi (Borussia Mönchengladbach, £6.8m), Michael Zetterer (Eintracht Frankfurt, £4.3m), Jean-Mattéo Bahoya (Eintracht Frankfurt, loan), Melvin Bard (Nice, loan), Harry Wilson (Fulham, free)
Key outs: Pascal Struijk (Brighton, £18m), Joe Gelhardt (Hull, £6.5m), Lucas Perri (Torino, loan), Sebastiaan Bornauw (Hamburg, loan), Joël Piroe (West Ham, loan), Illan Meslier (Arsenal, free)

Liverpool

The final window of Richard Hughes's spell as sporting director raised more questions over Liverpool's direction under Fenway Sports Group, owners soon to be enriched by a £2bn investment from 1892 Holdings. The shift towards paying big money for big names continued with Bradley Barcola's arrival from Paris Saint-Germain while Jérémy Jacquet and Victor Muñoz followed the older policy of developing young potential. Yet weaknesses remain at right-back, defensive midfield and on the right wing, where Mohamed Salah's exit was foreseen from December. Squad depth is lacking and a lot rests on the return to full fitness of Hugo Ekitiké, Conor Bradley and Giovanni Leoni. **AH**

Key ins: Bradley Barcola (PSG, £123m), Jérémy Jacquet (Rennes, £55m), Víctor Muñoz (Osasuna, £34.5m), Ronald Araújo (Barcelona, loan)
Key outs: Curtis Jones (Inter, £25.7m), Harvey Elliott (Valencia, loan), Mohamed Salah (Trabzonspor, free), Ibrahima Konaté (Real Madrid, free), Andy Robertson (Tottenham, free)

Manchester City

With Enzo Fernández's deadline day signing for a British record-equalling £125m, Enzo Maresca can have zero complaints about a first window as Manchester City's head coach. The No 8 follows two No 6s in Elliot Anderson (£116m) and Ayyoub Bouaddi (£85m), and the total spend on incomings was £457.5m. Factor in how City have generated £281.8m in outgoings for a net spend of £175.7m, the division's third-biggest of the window, and this sizeable investment has to work – particularly the acquisition of Fernández. **Jamie Jackson**

Key ins: Enzo Fernández (Chelsea, £125m), Elliot Anderson (Nottingham Forest, £116m), Ayyoub Bouaddi (Lille, £85.7m), Iliman Ndiaye (Everton, £60m), Allan (Palmeiras, £32m), Mathys Detourbet (Troyes, £21.6m), Gerónimo Rulli (Marseille, £1.7m)
Key outs: Sávio (Tottenham, £75m), Nico González (Newcastle, £52m), Tijjani Reijnders (Al-Qadsiah, £52m), Rodri (Barcelona, £51.3m), James Trafford (Leeds, £40.5m), Nathan Aké (Fenerbahce, £7m), Omar Marmoush (Tottenham, loan), Jack Grealish (Everton, loan), John Stones (Inter, free), Bernardo Silva (Real Madrid, free)

Manchester United

This was the window of the midfielder for United, with three recruited: Youri Tielemans (a No 8),

▼ *Manchester City paid Nottingham Forest £116m for Elliot Anderson*
MARC ATKINS/GETTY IMAGES

Andrey Santos and Carlos Baleba (No 6s). Yet missing was a left-back despite the targeting of Lewis Hall, and others, plus reinforcements for the rest of a creaking rearguard. The reason? A lack of money or, maybe, a reluctance to spend unless the finance was generated by transfers. Manuel Ugarte's long-term injury (preventing his sale) and Joshua Zirkzee's reluctance to move were factors. Will the stand-in options prove adequate? **JJ**

Key ins: Carlos Baleba (Brighton, £70m), Andrey Santos (Chelsea, £50m), Youri Tielemans (Aston Villa, £35m)
Key outs: Rasmus Højlund (Napoli, £43.2m), Casemiro (Inter Miami, free)

Newcastle

Newcastle describe their transfer window as "transformative" and, with reinvention the name of the game on Tyneside, it is easy to see why. After selling Anthony Gordon, Sandro Tonali and Bruno Guimarães for not too far off £250m, they have signed eight – mainly young – players. Along the way the spine of a team now managed by Matthias Jaissle rather than Eddie Howe has been renewed. The deadline-day arrival of the 21-year-old Belgium forward Matias Fernandez-Pardo from Lille is regarded as a coup. Have Newcastle choreographed a triumph from a window that looked potentially disastrous? **LT**

Key ins: Nico González (Manchester City, £52m), Matias Fernandez-Pardo (Lille, £51m), Bazoumana Touré (Hoffenheim, £43m), Aladji Bamba (Monaco, £30m), Amar Dedic (Benfica, £29.5m), Lukas Hornicek (Braga, £25.7m), Ewen Jaouen (Reims, £21.6m), Sean Steur (Ajax, £20m)
Key outs: Sandro Tonali (Tottenham, £92.5m), Bruno Guimarães (Arsenal, £75m), Anthony Gordon (Barcelona, £69.3m), Nick Woltemade (Juventus, loan), Kieran Trippier (Wolves, free)

Nottingham Forest

Receiving £116m for Elliot Anderson was proof that among the chaos in recent years, Forest have carried out some smart

▲ *James Trafford will boost Leeds' defence after a £40m move from City*

recruitment. After appointing Oliver Glasner, the club worked to provide for his needs, splashing out on Ousmane Diomande, while Xaver Schlager was a sensible acquisition for free, as was Daniel Muñoz at £22m. A No 9 was the priority and it required a club record £45m to acquire Liam Delap, who fits the bill perfectly. Whether not sourcing a direct replacement for Anderson will hurt them remains to be seen but at least they did not panic, making it a measured window. **Will Unwin**

Key ins: Liam Delap (Chelsea, £45m), Ousmane Diomande (Sporting, £34.2m), Daniel Muñoz (Crystal Palace, £22m), Steven Benda (Fulham, free), Xaver Schlager (RB Leipzig, free)
Key outs: Elliot Anderson (Manchester City, £116m), Taiwo Awoniyi (Coventry City, £9m), Omari Hutchinson (Milan, loan), Stefan Ortega (Olympiakos, free), Jota Silva (Olympiakos, loan), Morato (West Ham, loan)

Sunderland

After last summer's 14 new faces this had been a bit of a conservative, almost slightly underwhelming, window. Or at least it was until Crystal Palace tried to hijack Sunderland's agreement to sign the Lyon winger Malick Fofana and the two Premier League clubs engaged in an astonishing deadline day tug of war. Arguably the biggest achievement was keeping last season's star players. If persuading Granit Xhaka to stay rather than defect to Chelsea was vital, Régis Le Bris will be similarly delighted to have retained Enzo Le Fée, Robin Roefs and Noah Sadiki. **LT**

Key ins: Malick Fofana (Lyon, £31m), Dayann Méthalie (Toulouse, £24m), Kevin Danso (Tottenham, loan), Thomas Meunier (Lille, free)
Key outs: Eliezer Mayenda (Rennes, £17.1m)

Tottenham

A comprehensive reboot featuring a club record outlay for a window and one of the most lavish by any club ever. In the first summer window since the departure of the longstanding chair Daniel Levy, the hierarchy have backed Roberto De Zerbi in an attempt to put the trauma of last season behind them. All the new signings have Premier League experience and – apart from Mateus Fernandes and Sávio – are aged 25 or over. In other words, they ought to be ready to hit the ground running. The opening two matches did not go to plan. It will get better. Won't it? **David Hytner**

Key ins: Sandro Tonali (Newcastle, £92.5m), Mateus Fernandes (West Ham, £85m), Sávio (Manchester City, £75m), Jan Paul van Hecke (Brighton, £52m), Tosin Adarabioyo (Chelsea, £7m), Omar Marmoush (Manchester City, loan), Martin Dubravka (Burnley, loan), Mykhailo Mudryk (Chelsea, loan), Marcos Senesi (Bournemouth, free), Andy Robertson (Liverpool, free)
Key outs: Luka Vuskovic (Brighton, £46m), Cristian Romero (Atlético Madrid, £34.1m), Djed Spence (Inter, £25.6m), Radu Dragusin (Fiorentina, loan), Guglielmo Vicario (Juventus, loan), Pape Matar Sarr (Juventus, loan), Kevin Danso (Sunderland, loan)

Data analysis: what we learned this summer

Premier League clubs spent £3.46bn – 11.9% up on last year. Here are three aspects worthy of closer scrutiny

Andrew Beasley

Priorities on age have changed

Premier League clubs are spending less on players in the peak 24-27 age band even though those players are increasingly the core of their selections. As recently as 2021-22, 40% of minutes were taken by players at least 28 years old at the start of the season. That proportion has dropped each year, reaching 26.6% in 2025-26. The reliance on veterans has declined. The bulk of their lost minutes went to players aged between 24 and 27, which is now the dominant age band.

The spend on that key demographic has fallen by 23% since last summer though. Without Manchester City signing the 25-year-old Enzo Fernández for a British transfer record-equalling £125m shortly before the window closed, the drop would have been even greater.

Younger players account for some of the shortfall but a surprisingly high slice of it has gone towards older footballers. The Premier League has invested £323.3m in players aged at least 28, only around £50m shy of the outlay on this age range in the previous three summers combined (£370.5m). Their proportion of the total has not been as high for four years.

Arsenal signed two 28-year-olds for a combined £126m: Bruno Guimarães (£75m) and Ezri Konsa (£51m). Transfermarkt considers them to be the most expensive central midfielder and centre-back respectively aged over 27 in history.

The three most expensive Premier League signings of the summer before Fernández – Morgan Rogers, Elliot Anderson and Bradley Barcola – were 23 when their deals were completed. With only slightly less spent collectively on footballers who are 22, clubs have gone hard for players on the verge of entering their peak years rather than those in them.

The Premier League is becoming a closed shop

Perhaps the most notable aspect of transfer spending this summer is how much of it has remained within English football. Fourteen of the 19 signings that cost Premier League clubs at least £50m were made from within the division or from relegated West Ham. Where 30.2% of spending remained in the Premier League in summer 2022, the figure hit 39.3% this year.

With the combined outlay growing by almost £1.5bn in that period, what appears a relatively small percentage shift becomes a significant figure in the accounts. The squad cost ratio rules are unlikely to stem this flow either, because clubs will be happy to sell for inflated fees that can almost only come from within the division.

Barcola was the oldest of the five costliest signings from overseas, with Matias Fernandez-Pardo and Jérémy Jacquet (aged 21), Johan Manzambi (aged 20) and Ayyoub Bouaddi (aged 18) completing the set. The Premier League is able to retain its top stars, its clubs exchanging them among themselves, while having the funds to hoover up the most exciting young talent from elsewhere.

Squad-building trends may be evolving, but the money is here and most of it is not going anywhere else. English football is starting to become an enclosed ecosystem.

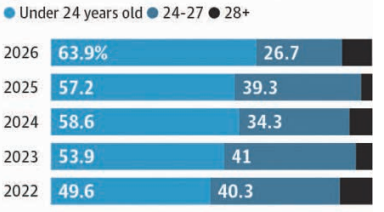
The rest of Europe cannot keep up

Very few clubs across Europe come close to competing financially. The Premier League features a match this weekend between the top two teams in Europe for net spend and it isn't Arsenal v Chelsea. Liverpool's trip to Ipswich takes the honour.

The promoted sides have invested enormous sums to try to be competitive. They have all played League One football within the previous eight seasons, yet Real Madrid are the only club from another country with a higher net spend than Hull or Coventry.

The cream can probably only move within England. The transfer fee for Rogers (£117m) or Anderson (£116m) was above the net spend of 75 of the 76 top-flight clubs in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Milan narrowly spent more than the cost of Sandro Tonali (£92.5m) net, but no other side beyond Madrid from mainland Europe did. Most would have to have a clearout of talent to raise funds for a single elite player from the Premier League, which isn't practical.

Percentage of Premier League spend in summer transfer windows



Source: Guardian research

Nine of the top 10 clubs* for net spend this summer are in the Premier League

Source: Guardian research. *in Europe's top five leagues

LIVERPOOL FC/GETTY IMAGES

Money loses meaning in chaotic carnival of excess

Clockwise from left: Bradley Barcola (£123m), Morgan Rogers (£117m) and Enzo Fernández (£125m) - the summer's three most expensive signings in Europe

Manic transfer window has broken all rational rules and limits, leading us to marvel – and pick up the bill

Barney Ronay

There was a research study a few years back into a key period in the life of the TV show Location, Location, Location. You know the one. Half an hour of mid-morning drift. Hosted by two people whose common quality is they both look as if the minced essence of Wellington boots, the Volvo XC40 and the phrase "picky bits" has been reconstituted into human shapes, then sent out to judge people for buying houses.

The big reveal was always the bit where they came back a year later and saw how much the value had shifted. Because all conversations about houses are, in the end, an excuse to talk about money. Oh wow, it's gone up by £20,000. You are good. Oh no, you're now bankrupt and your flat looks like a hostage cell with fairy lights. Unlucky. You are bad.

What the study found was that prices basically always increased. Ripping out the stairs, living in a tent in the garden, arguing about what to do with the two-and-a-halfth bedroom – all of this was irrelevant. These were the boom times of the early 2000s, UK housing recast as a global money trap, an endlessly whirling laundromat, a bricks and mortar central bank bond.

These people could have bought their run-down three-bed, left it empty and done absolutely nothing for two years. The price would have still gone up. That drama about exactly which shade of Anaconda Breath Morgue And Cakebread Mega-Gloss to use in the underfloor wine cave? Just doesn't matter. Buy the soil. Shut the door. Let money do its thing.

And yes, this is a way of talking about the 2026 summer transfer window, and the way in which everyone has basically now been Chelsea-ed. Think back four years to the start of the age of Clearlake, the first post-Roman spree. At that time it seemed impossible there could be a profitable outcome. Chelsea were out there buying the vintage copper-plate statement bidet. Chelsea were digging out a third sub-basement. Who will redeem this expense? Who will provide a similarly deranged response to such overinvestment?

Well, it turns out the market will do this for you. If you'd predicted then that Chelsea would miss out on the Champions League and go through five permanent managers, but still make a profit from selling Enzo Fernández, would anyone have believed it?

Or that Mykhailo Mudryk could run around briefly like a deranged hamster, get banned for failing a drugs test and still become a potential growth asset? This is pre-subprime crash energy. Yes, you can install a solar-powered mega-wetroom that fires sourdough breadsticks directly into your eyes. Whatever. Ownership is all. Money will take care of you.

There are still levels to this. The one Chelsea thing to shift in the window is that the curtain has now been drawn on those initial eight months, the period where Todd Boehly became the world's worst director of football, a director of football who basically didn't know what football was.

That period has now been safely capped off. Only two players remain. Rough out the numbers and Chelsea spent something like £200m in fees, wages, leaks and cuts, with only Malo Gusto and Wesley Fofana to show for it. No real damage. Money comes, money goes. We roll on.

This is the lesson of the latest summer transfer window. Right now it doesn't really matter what you do in the Premier League. Just being in it is the thing. With one caveat, which is that nobody actually knows what's happening here. We can marvel at a record window. We can see the biggest spenders are Manchester City on £457.5m, the lowest Crystal Palace on about £50m, the highest net Liverpool on £216.8m. We can pore over Aston Villa buying the bones of a new squad for £56.7m net gain.

But we can't know what it means, at least not financially. This is part of the design of money on this scale. As the then Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan put it in a famous speech on the mysteries of big money: "How do we know when irrational exuberance has unduly escalated asset values, which then become subject to unexpected and prolonged contractions?"

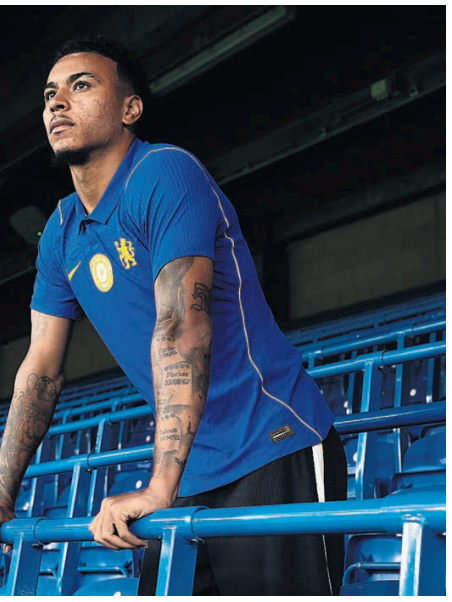
Mykhailo Mudryk has joined Spurs on loan from Chelsea

Nobody knew what this meant then. Nobody knows what it means now. "Irrational exuberance" is a good phrase, one Greenspan later said came to him in the bath. It was designed to convey the essential point: opacity, vagueness, invisible flows. If not for those actually riding the tide, because someone is always making money. Someone out there actively wants the Premier League's financial chaos, and is benefiting from it gloriously.

Otherwise, reading the runes is just a matter of guesswork. Money moves between networked entities. Everyone inside wins. Everyone outside pays for it. But still, this feels new, if only in its extremity.

This was captured by the weirdness of Sky Sports' transfer deadline programme on Tuesday. At one point a man appeared strumming a guitar, smiling as if he had just filleted a litter of kittens in his basement, and sang a Bradley Barcola Liverpool song to the tune of Don't Dream It's Over, like this is all just normal and fine.

Later there was a golden period at about 5.30pm where every deal just seemed wrong and impossible, a fever dream after an over-ripe seafood risotto. Aston Villa have paid £47m for an 18-year-old winger. Gabriel Jesus is going to Barcelona. Jack Grealish is having a medical at Everton, an event that seems to prove the non-



DARREN WALSH/CHELSEA FC VIA GETTY IMAGES

MANCHESTER CITY FC

linear nature of time, a medical that is always happening, never not happening, a constant time-space event.

Meanwhile two private jets are on the tarmac in Lyon as three clubs try to sign Malick Fofana. "We STILL don't know what Malick Fofana is thinking," the man with the microphone concluded, mournfully, and this seemed profoundly true and on point. We don't. Does Malick Fofana even know this? If so, how can he? Nobody else has a clue what's going on.

It is worth trying to list the best deals. Harry Wilson on a free can only be good. Djed Spence to Inter is great. *Forza*, Djed. Barcola to Liverpool for £123m is lots of money, but he's really young and knows how to score once he's settled.

Newcastle seem to have had a good window, racking up a list of signings that scream inside knowledge and good data, and chime with Matthias Jaissle's mercurial vibe. Manchester City's signings have to be good. There's so many of them, and they're all excellent players. That midfield is surely just too big to fail.

Arsenal will also be fine, despite not signing a 1950s-style hotshot goal ace with dynamite in his boots and the brain of a hungry magpie. Yes, they've lost two, maybe three attackers. But these are Jesus and probably Gabriel Martinelli, meat in the room, plus Leandro Trossard, replaced by basically the same guy. Arsenal won the league with Kai Havertz, Martin Ødegaard, Bukayo Saka and Eberechi Eze short of their ceiling. If you can't score enough to win with that lot then it's really not the players.

Manchester United's window looks quite good, but also scattergun. Carlos Baleba may be great, or may wander around like a lost child in Lidl before being loaned to Monaco. Tottenham have mined the club's DNA, gone back to their spiritual roots, and signed players who will be really good for four games, then disappear and get tattoos.

Meanwhile Everton have swapped Dwight McNeil for Brennan Johnson. What does it mean? Can you even visualise this as an event? Beto and Iliman Ndiaye have gone, taking away a third of last season's league goals. Welcome, Everton fans, to the fully immersive Thierno Barry multiverse.

Otherwise the main takeaway is the meaninglessness of big football money. Most notably the size of the most basic fees. Little wonder there is a sense of alienation from familiar notions of team building, blocks in place, footballers as recognisable avatars of graft and cultural chemistry. These are stocks, talent units, a flow of resources.

Remember the Peter Odemwingie deadline day fiasco, where Odemwingie sat fuming in his car while the world was sucked into this human drama? That whole thing was about the unbridgeable leap from £2m to £3m. Coventry have just signed Caleb Yirenkyi from Nordsjælland for £23m. Does "Caleb Yirenkyi" really exist? Are you sure?

Who pays in the end for this circulation of funds? You, for starters. There is no such thing as football money. It's all TV rights, state propaganda funds and hard private investment from the kind of people who really don't give without taking back in the end.

On one level books are being balanced, accounting rules satisfied, clubs swapping assets at fees driven in part by regulatory requirements. More obscurely Boehly once talked about a rush of cash being diverted football's way as a sub-avalanche from quantitative easing in the US, because money just has to go somewhere. No, me neither.

All that seems certain is money is being pushed around the board. And that it feels wildly abstract. The window was thrilling, its possibilities endless, a shot of blood for the new season. Beyond this, big football and big finance are playing their own game, in a way that goes beyond the human scale and into a world of pure money. The message below the headlines is clear. This thing belongs to them. Your job, human consumer unit, is simply to look at it and have feelings.

Jonathan Liew *Page 34* →

Deadline shambles leaves Moyes to fight the odds yet again

Everton's owners have been amateurish and unambitious yet expect the club to go further with fewer resources

Andy Hunter

To be placed in the same bracket as owners whose lack of ambition, lack of resources and/or incompetence has contributed to the longest trophy drought in Everton's history should be cause for considerable discomfort and embarrassment at The Friedkin Group (TFG) today. The slight on Everton's owner is neither unkind nor unfair. At least Farhad Moshiri had a go before the taps were turned off.

TFG may have restored financial stability to Everton after the near-ruinous chaos of Moshiri's final years and his attempts to sell to 777 Partners but its reputation as "winners" – as the club's chief executive, Angus Kinnear, labelled his American employers – has been shredded in the space of four days. From accepting Nottingham Forest's £35m bid for Harrison Armstrong on Saturday to Folarin Balogun walking away from a £40m move from Monaco on Tuesday, and more in between, TFG has positioned itself as just another Everton owner unable to give an expectant fanbase optimism.

Evertonians hoped for an overdue departure when TFG acquired the club in December 2024 and proceeded to refinance damaging loans and the long-term repayment costs of Hill Dickinson Stadium. The shambles of deadline day, however, has caused serious damage to its standing among supporters.

David Moyes kept his counsel throughout pre-season as Everton spent £16.5m on Hayden Hackney, rising to £25m for last season's Championship player of the year, £18m on each of Merlin Röhl and Tyrique George, who he had on loan last season, £7m on Christian Nørgaard and swapped Dwight McNeil for Brennan Johnson. The most Everton paid up front for a player would prove to be £18m.

When Moyes did eventually speak in public it was to stress, repeatedly, the need for Everton to sign more players, more quality and to keep their best talents. At the end of last season he had 22 outfield players at his disposal. At the start of deadline day he had 20 outfield players. By the end of transfer deadline day he had 18.

That total includes one striker, Thierno Barry, no back-up for either full-back and, strictly speaking given that Ainsley Maitland-Niles did not start out in the position, no natural right-back. Everton sold their most creative asset, Iliman Ndiaye, to Manchester City in a below-market price £65m deal despite the Senegal international having three years on his contract. They sold Beto, their only alternative to Barry, before securing a replacement and were left scrambling around for one when Balogun's medical went awry.

Manchester United said no to a loan offer for Joshua Zirkzee that arrived a few hours before the deadline. Tammy Abraham said no to leaving Aston Villa. Finally Balogun, having arrived later than scheduled for his medical and seen Everton renegotiate the terms of his fee with Monaco, compounded the chaos by also saying no despite signing a deal sheet shortly before 11pm. Barry looked out of his depth for much of his debut season in the Premier League. Now he is the precious commodity that Everton cannot afford to lose.

Kinnear gave several interviews two weeks ago that painted a rosy picture of the club's finances, transfer strategy and ambition. The chief executive also got his manager's back up by claiming TFG regarded not qualifying for Europe last season as "a failure".

Moyes's team face-planted during last season's run-in, failing to win any of their last seven games when Europe was in reach. He has been challenged to go further with fewer resources. An added annoyance for Moyes and supporters is that Everton have started this season brightly, only to be surrounded by problems entirely of the hierarchy's making.

It was Kinnear who implemented a new "senior leadership team" at Everton and the move away from a director of football model. The team consists of the technical director, Nick Cox, director of scouting and recruitment, James Smith, director of football strategy and analytics, Chris Howarth and head of player trading, Nick Hammond. Moyes is also part of the leadership team, although he has appeared to be on a different page this summer. There has been sensible, cost-effective recruitment for Hackney, Röhl and Johnson but the end to the window invites criticism of the leadership team's effectiveness and expertise. It resembles a case of too many chiefs and no clear direction, especially given some of the targets Everton went for in the final days.

The collapse of the Balogun deal has caused turmoil at Everton but a player getting cold feet over a move or a medical jeopardising a deal can happen. It is events under Everton's control, and decisions they have taken, that are of greater concern. TFG's decision to accept Forest's offer for Armstrong, the first academy prospect to graduate through the ranks and establish himself since Anthony Gordon six years ago, was the first indication that Everton were struggling to meet the new squad cost ratios. So much for a new financial era at Hill Dickinson.

TFG merits some credit for listening to supporters over the proposed sale of Armstrong and pulling the plug. To then consider selling Ndiaye to Tottenham for £60m and spending £35m on Richarlison, however, was another alarming sign.

Everton have been looking for a right-back since Moyes returned to the club in January 2025, and needed one before then. Moyes wanted Guéla Doué from Strasbourg but the 23-year-old was deemed too expensive. Doué joined Bayer Leverkusen on deadline day for £25.7m. At least five alternatives were explored before Everton, their £9m deal for Fulham's Kenny Tete having fallen through, signed Maitland-Niles as the £4.3m answer to one glaring problem.

The Everton fans' forum and Everton fan advisory board issued statements yesterday criticising the club's amateurish, unambitious approach to the transfer window. The 1878s, the group of volunteers responsible for the impressive tifos and banners at the stadium, has withdrawn its support for the foreseeable future. "We do not feel that our fanbase's ambitions and the club's ambitions align right now – what happened yesterday has proved that even more," the group said.

It looks a long road back to acceptance for TFG, Kinnear and Everton's senior leadership team.

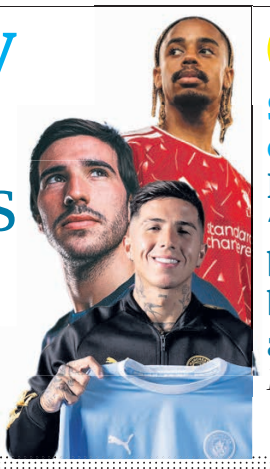
▲ *Everton sold their most creative asset, Iliman Ndiaye, to Manchester City*

JAMIE JOHNSTON/FOCUS IMAGES LTD/SHUTTERSTOCK

The £3.46bn transfer frenzy

How every Premier League club fared, plus Barney Ronay's and Jonathan Liew's verdicts

Complete guide *Pages 34, 38-41 →*



Summer's over Itoje to 'come back better' after rest

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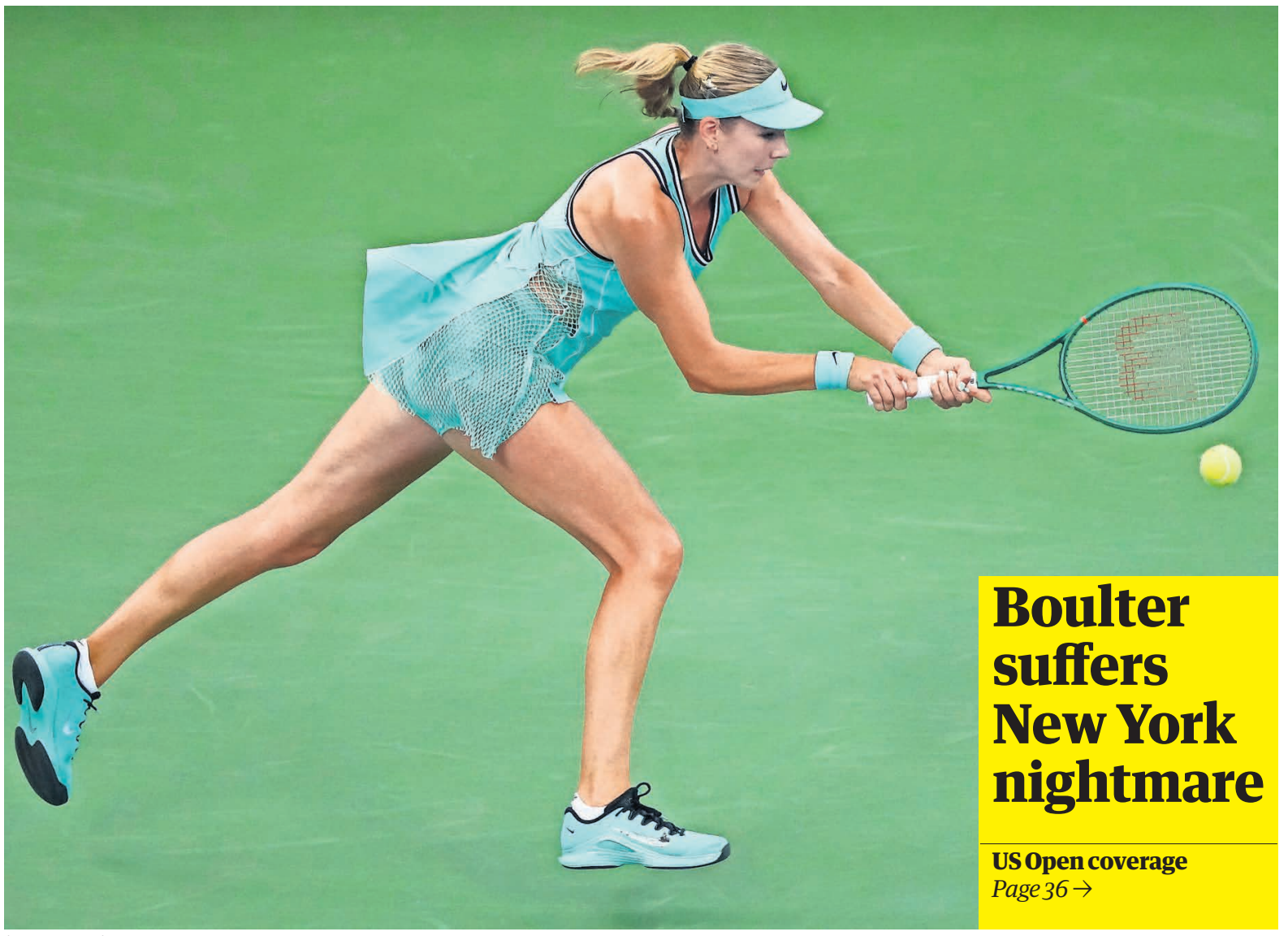
The Guardian
Thursday
3 September
2026

Sport



/YUKI IWAMURA/AP PHOTO

Boulter suffers New York nightmare

US Open coverage *Page 36 →*

Hampshire make U-turn on Kuggeleijn after backlash

Tanya Aldred

Hampshire made a quick about turn yesterday on the signing of the controversial New Zealand all-rounder Scott Kuggeleijn after a backlash from supporters.

Kuggeleijn, who has played 23 times for New Zealand, was put on trial for rape in 2016 and, after a hung jury, again in 2017. He was found not guilty at the second trial.

When asked about the complainant's evidence to the court that she had said "no" dozens of times to sex, the New Zealand Herald reported that Kuggeleijn told the court it was "a lie". "I tried [having sex] twice, like she might have said 'no, no' a few times but it wasn't dozens of times."

The defence also claimed the woman was "dressed very provocatively." There have been protests previously about his presence in New Zealand sides.

With four crucial Championship games to go, and Hampshire in dire need of points to avoid relegation, the club quietly included Kuggeleijn in their squad for the match against Warwickshire, without any of the usual social media fanfare. Reaction was instant and unfavourable, both online and within the ranks at the club. Just minutes before play was due to start, Kuggeleijn, who was in the ground but remained in the club hotel, had his contract rescinded.

"Having reflected and listened to feedback from our staff and supporters Hampshire Cricket can confirm that Scott Kuggeleijn will not represent the club," read the statement.

"We value the passion of our fanbase and thank everyone who took the time to share their views. Our focus now turns to supporting the team through the final four fixtures of the season. We encourage everyone to unite behind the team as we enter a crucial stage of the campaign."

County roundup *Page 35 →*

▲ *Fans reacted to Scott Kuggeleijn's inclusion after he was tried for rape*

'He decided not to sign'

Balogun pulled out of Everton move over medical, say Monaco

Andy Hunter

Folarin Balogun pulled out of a £40m move to Everton because of how he was treated over his medical, according to Monaco's chief executive, Thiago Scuro, who also defended the late decision not to sell Lamine Camara to Chelsea.

Balogun signed a deal sheet shortly before 11pm on deadline day to allow Everton to complete his transfer only to reject the move shortly after. Everton had renegotiated the structure of the fee with Monaco after discovering an issue with the USA international's medical and failing in attempts to sign Joshua Zirkzee or Tammy Abraham on loan.

Everton sources have claimed the 25-year-old arrived later than scheduled from France and that Monaco were slow in sharing the appropriate medical records, giving them less time to resolve the problem. But at a press conference in Monaco yesterday, Scuro insisted it was Everton's treatment of the striker that caused the deal to collapse.

▲ *Monaco blame Everton for the collapse of the Folarin Balogun deal*

"The Premier League has a mechanism where you can request one extra hour to finish the paperwork," he said. "This was done five minutes to the close of the transfer window. I signed the contract, Everton signed the contract. At the last moment, the player decided not to sign. And basically, the allegation of Balogun is: 'I'm not feeling well by the way the club treated me. I'm not feeling well by the way the medical department of Everton brought doubts about my future or my health. I have nothing [wrong with me], so I'm not comfortable to sign a long contract here.'"

Scuro insisted he did not want to "create war" with Everton or Chelsea over their failed deadline-day deals but disputed the former's concerns over Balogun's medical results.

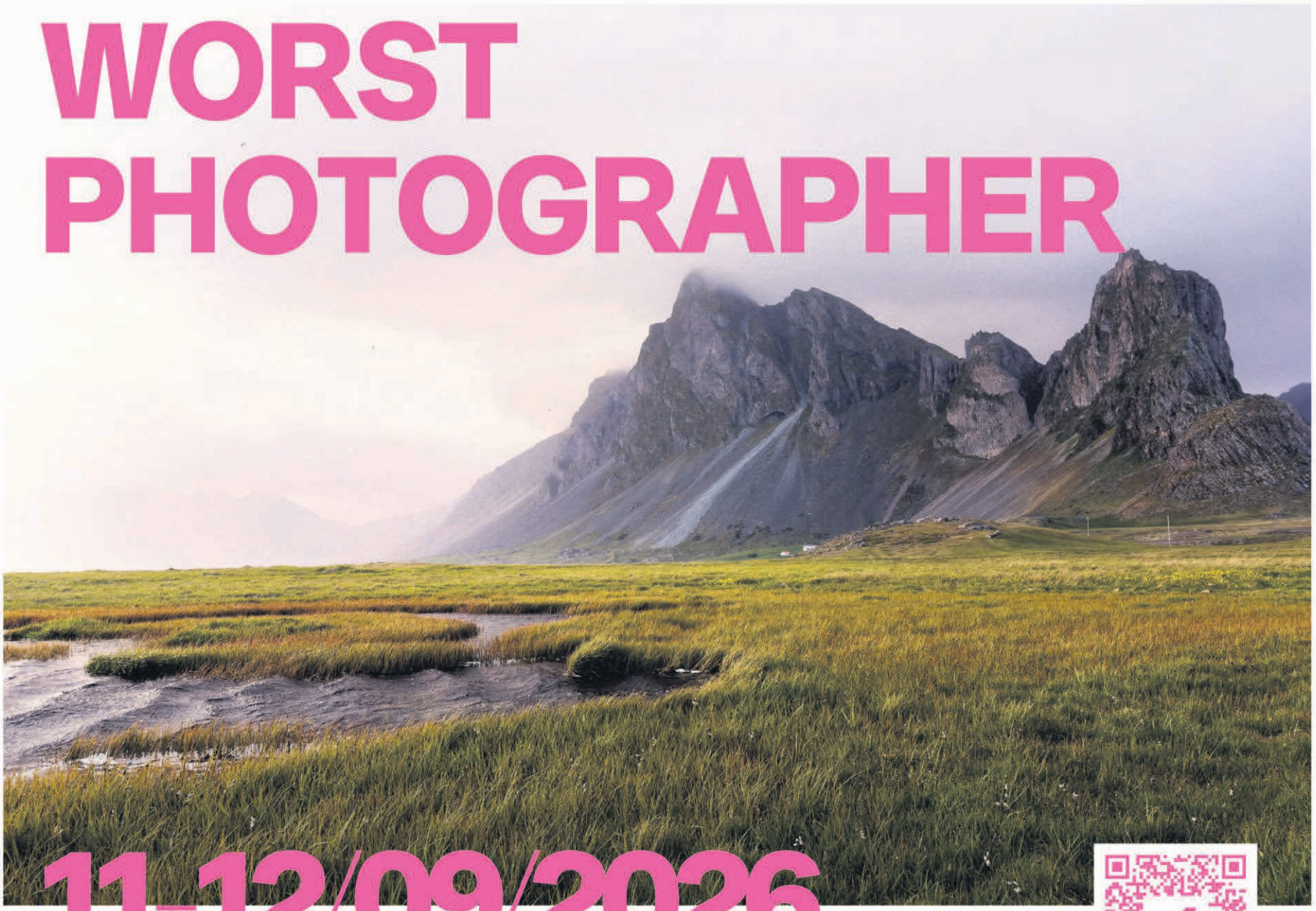
Chelsea struck a £47m deal to sign Camara as they looked to replace the Manchester City-bound Enzo Fernández, with a written agreement believed to have been in place.

However Monaco, who wanted to raise funds but preferred to sell Balogun, reneged on the Camara deal with Chelsea once Everton decided to proceed with their move for Balogun.

Scuro said: "Around 10pm, in our time here, maybe a bit earlier, Everton realised that OK there is no problem: 'We are ready to do it. Let's sign the contract.' As soon as we got the information, yes, we did come back to Chelsea and told [them]: 'OK, we have our deal there. There is no deal on Lamine.' Because it's also fair to do this. It's also part of the game."

Deadline shambles *Page 41 →*

ICELAND BY THE WORLD'S WORST PHOTOGRAPHER



11-12/09/2026

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Farewell to a terrible leader. We desperately wanted more *Zoe Williams, page 3*

It's September: it must be time to reset my entire life *Emma Brockes, page 4*

John Irvin, director known for Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy *Obituaries, page 6*

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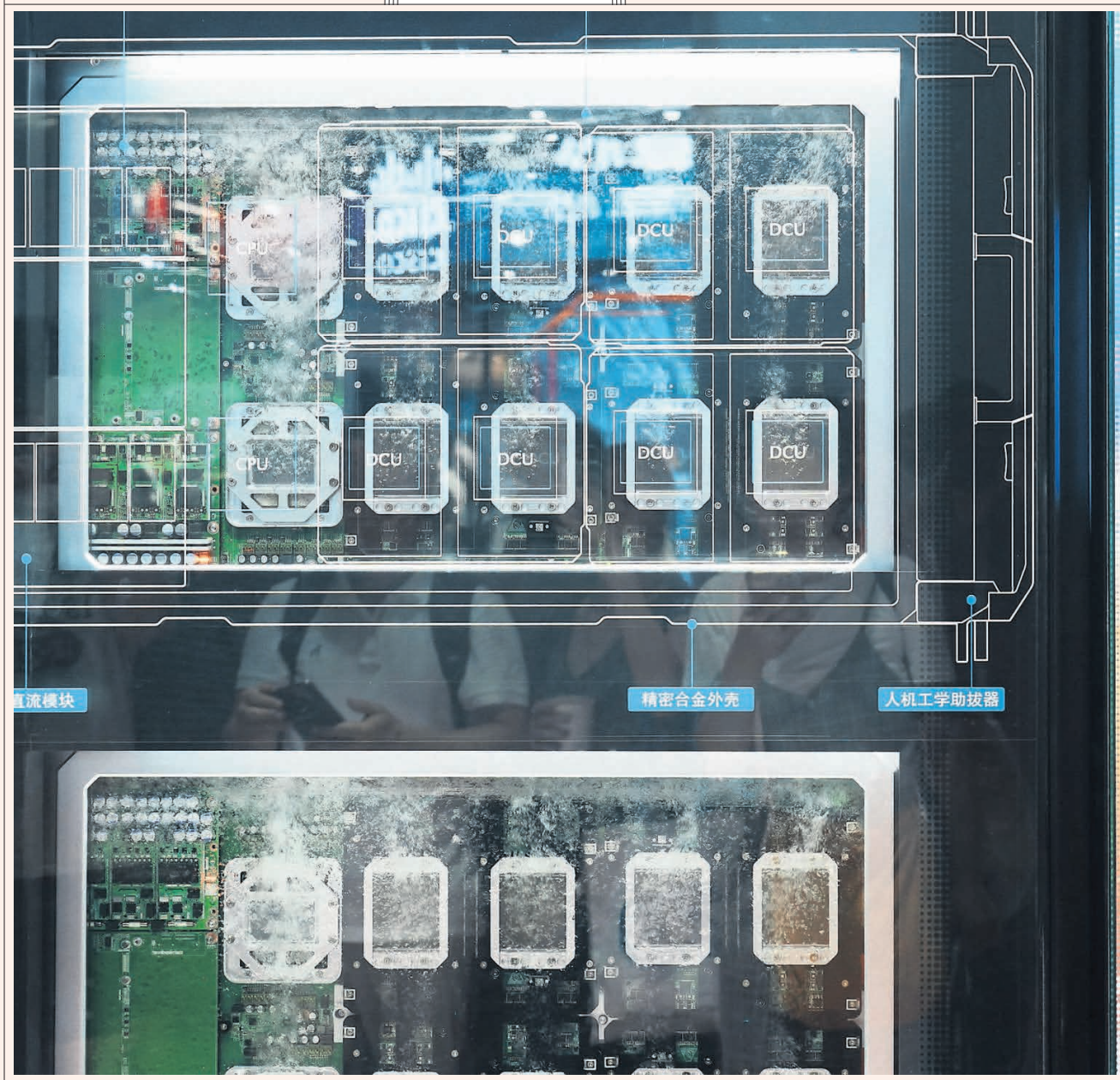
Opinion and ideas



A visitor at the World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai, China, in July
PHOTOGRAPH: VCG/ GETTY IMAGES

The US thought the AI race was won. China has proved it wrong

Larry Elliott

Almost from the moment it began, the end of the Chinese economic miracle has been much anticipated. Thick and fast, the books have come explaining how it will end badly. Overinvestment. A country wallowing in debt. The collapse of the property market. Political repression. The demand for democracy from a growing middle class. All have been put forward as reasons for the inevitable terminal crisis.

Even those impressed by the country's rapid growth took comfort from the notion that the west would continue to dominate advanced manufacturing while China would be stuck assembling TVs. And while the wait for its much-predicted demise has gone on and on, China has become the workshop of the world.

This process has come in two distinct phases. Initially, it is true, there was a concentration on low-cost manufactured goods because cheap labour costs provided a competitive advantage. Firms left for east Asia in search of higher profits. Without China 1.0, Donald Trump would have remained a New York property developer and Brexit might never have happened.

Yet the Chinese were not content to remain solely the producers of low-cost consumer goods and began to invest heavily in higher-end manufacturing. China 2.0 shattered the illusion that it would forever remain a developing economy destined to produce low-grade products and little else.

The market in solar panels was captured. It became the world leader in batteries and electric vehicles. It no longer has to import machine tools from Germany because it is now capable of making its own. The rise of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland is in no small measure due to the threat posed by China to German manufacturing jobs.

Of course, China's critics have a point. The model relies too heavily on investment and has much excess capacity. The country produces far more goods than it can consume domestically, particularly given the low level of wages and a relatively ungenerous welfare system. As a result, China can only keep growing at a rate that prevents rising unemployment from leading to social unrest if it exports its surfeit of goods to the rest of the world. China found itself isolated at the recent meeting of finance ministers of the G20 group of leading developed and developing countries,

2

The US thought the AI race was won. China has proved it wrong

Larry Elliott

← Continued from front

facing criticism from all sides for failing to boost domestic demand for its products.

Perhaps this means the rest of the world has finally woken up to the threat. If it has, that would not be a moment too soon because China is now competing with the US for dominance in the race to develop artificial intelligence. Welcome to China 3.0.

In July, a Chinese startup called Moonshot unveiled its Kimi K3 model and it was an instant success. Just two days after its launch, the company suspended new subscriptions because demand was too great for its computing capacity. That was not surprising given that Kimi K3 was marketed as being able to match the models of its US rivals – such as the latest versions of OpenAI's ChatGPT – at no cost. This was not a fluke or a random event.

"Despite rising oil prices, share prices on Wall Street have reflected confidence not just that AI will transform economies, but that the US will be the main beneficiary. But China's success in AI could prick the stock market bubble

As Edoardo Campanella of UniCredit notes, Beijing is pursuing a clear AI strategy: staying close to the technological frontier, diffusing its models throughout the global economy and setting standards across international markets. "If this strategy succeeds, the third China shock might not just disrupt the global economy, but also the global balance of power," says Campanella.

Beijing's strategy may not succeed, but even so there are three things that are striking about the AI development race. The first is that this would appear to be the worst possible time for Washington to antagonise its traditional allies by whacking them with punitive tariffs. The US needs all the friends it can muster.

The second is that the arrival on the scene of free Chinese AI models could spell big trouble for global markets. Until now, the US has been confident its technological prowess will give it the upper hand in the AI development race and that has justified massive investment in technology companies.

Despite rising oil prices, share prices on Wall Street have reflected confidence not just that AI will transform economies, but that the US will be the main beneficiary. But if China can develop its AI models at a lower cost and offer them for nothing, investors will soon start to question whether the massive investment in the US justifies the sky-high share prices of tech companies. China's success in AI could prick the stock market bubble.

Finally, there are lessons that countries such as Britain need to learn from China if it is to re-industrialise. When China began to build up its manufacturing strength almost 50 years ago, it saw itself as a developing country. It had no illusions about the scale of the challenge, but had a plan and stuck to it.

There was no aversion to picking winners. Nor would the strategy be left exposed to the whims of speculators. Instead, there was a willingness to use all the policy tools available: subsidies, tariffs, exchange controls and state investment.

The result is what we see now: a China that has shifted through the gears from an industrial policy dominated by cheap goods to an industrial policy of everything. Sure, China's model has its flaws, but there is a stark contrast with Britain's negligent approach since the late 1970s. One country is serious about manufacturing and the other isn't.

The Guardian

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Conservatives

Kemi Badenoch cannot restore trust from her ideological comfort zone

To outlast a prime minister always counts as some kind of achievement for an opposition leader, although Kemi Badenoch cannot claim credit for Sir Keir Starmer's downfall. Sir Keir's wounds were mostly self-inflicted. To the extent that opposition pressure was involved, it was electoral threats from Reform UK and the Green party that stoked Labour party frustration to a regicidal pitch. The Tory leader's role was largely as a spectator.

Mrs Badenoch still hopes to use regime change to her advantage. She thinks the economy, and fiscal discipline in particular, will be her most fruitful line of attack. In their first confrontation at prime minister's questions yesterday, the Conservative leader called Mr Burnham a "spendthrift" and "people pleaser" who will dodge the tough decisions required to prove Britain's creditworthiness on international markets. She expects him to yield to Labour MPs' demands for budget increases, which will then have to be financed with tax rises.

In that scenario, Mrs Badenoch imagines a vacancy for a rehabilitated small-state Conservative party offering hard-headed budget management, less profligate than Labour; more sober and respectable than Reform UK. That message would unite what remains of her depleted party. She can't compete with Nigel Farage on the terrain of anti-immigrant rhetoric (although that doesn't stop her aping his stances). She shows no interest in finding political accommodation for socially liberal, pro-European one-nation Tories who now have more in common with the Liberal Democrats than the modern Conservative party.

This leaves the Tories with a narrow focus on tax cuts, reining in welfare spending and deregulation as a spur to enterprise. Mr Farage supports those things too, but Mrs Badenoch believes that Reform UK's maverick style and the whiff of impropriety around its financial dealings make it an unreliable vehicle for a classically Thatcherite agenda that belongs, by rights, to Lady Thatcher's own party.

The claim to be the true keeper of the Thatcherite flame has become a ritual for Tory leaders. The mantle has passed through so many hands, it is threadbare as a political definition in 2026. It was worn most preposterously by Liz Truss, who posted photos of herself on social media recreating iconic images of the Iron Lady in her pomp. She then detonated her government with a "mini-budget" that was a crass pastiche of the economic ideas she claimed to venerate – a wild foray into fiscal irresponsibility masquerading as free-market radicalism.

One of the Treasury ministers who enthusiastically endorsed Ms Truss's plan, Andrew Griffith, was this week appointed Mrs Badenoch's new shadow chancellor. He replaces Mel Stride, a lower-octane performer who was deemed not to have made sufficient impact in the role. It is a revealing choice that undermines the Tory leader's plan to make economic competence the centrepiece of her pitch to lead the nation. When considering a potential chancellor, she clearly values the ability to grab attention over economic judgment.

This is consistent with a pattern of failure to engage with the full spectrum of failures over many years that accounts for the scale of Tory defeat at the last election. What Mrs Badenoch imagines to be a political strategy looks more like retreat to an ideological comfort zone in the hope that a second prime minister will self-destruct while she watches from the sidelines.

Sanctions

Britain should act as Israel tightens its grip on the occupied West Bank

In the Commons this week, the foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, appeared to have accepted the principle of a trade ban between the UK and Israeli settlements, which Britain says are illegal under international law. This is long overdue. The test now is whether his promised "comprehensive reset" deserves the name. Stopping settlement-produced goods at the border is not enough. Britain should prohibit its companies from sustaining settlement activity – by financing, constructing, insuring, advertising – in territory whose occupation it regards as unlawful. The ban must have teeth.

The UK can no longer ignore the violence and pressure exerted on Palestinians in the West Bank by Israel's government, military and settlers. There have been more than 1,400 settler attacks so far this year, according to the UN, against a record 1,800 registered in 2025. An election campaign has only made matters worse. Last month, Israel issued tenders for 1,234 homes in the 3,401-unit E1 development east of Jerusalem. The country's ministers gave the green light for the controversial settlement – long condemned for effectively bisecting the West Bank – expressly to "erase" the idea of a Palestinian state, the creation of which the UK officially supports.

Israeli ministers have reacted with fury, threatening retaliation if Britain imposes sanctions over settlement expansion. This is disappointing, but hardly surprising. Benjamin Netanyahu has accused countries imposing sanctions of "moral bankruptcy". Yet Britain would be following several comparable European states that increasingly regard such bans as a consequence of international law. Spain has banned settlement imports; Norway is legislating against trade and services linked to settlements; nine EU governments have demanded action from Brussels.

Since 1967, Israel has built about 160 settlements housing 700,000 Jewish people among 3.3 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. There are now calls to suspend the EU's trade agreement with Israel. Britain has such a deal and, under Sir Keir Starmer, Labour wanted to "distinguish and protect trade with people and businesses across the state of Israel". This gave critics reason to warn that targeting settlements could end up as a "de facto" boycott of Israel. But that gets the argument backwards: Israel cannot make the settlements part of its economy and then argue that other nations must treat them as part of the country.

Mr Miliband has political room to manoeuvre. Polling suggests that even Reform UK and Conservative voters are more likely to support than oppose a settlement trade ban. In parliament there was agreement stretching from the Greens to Labour to Tory MPs that something has to be done.

Settlement expansion accelerated after Mr Netanyahu's far-right coalition took power in 2022 and then again after Hamas's murderous attack sparked the Gaza war in 2023. The legal case is clear: other nations are acting and the political space is opening up – all while creeping annexation becomes a reality. Israel is extending civilian control over occupied territory as settlements expand. Gaza, where more than 70,000 Palestinians have been killed, has understandably commanded the world's attention. No one disputes that Israel exists in a violent and unstable neighbourhood, though its actions aggravate, rather than alleviate, that instability. But the West Bank and Jerusalem cannot be ignored. Security cannot justify an ideological land grab.

Farewell to a terrible leader. We desperately wanted more

Zoe Williams

Keir Starmer exits the British political stage as he entered it: doing the exact opposite of the thing he said he was going to do. It's only 10 weeks since he pledged to remain as MP for Holborn and St Pancras until the next election, despite stepping down as prime minister. That's plainly the decent course of action: a dedicated Labour man wouldn't want to force a byelection. Even if it's a slam dunk for the party, it inevitably draws focus and resources from more important matters.

The Tories are crying U-turn at this resignation, and technically it is – but the category needs more subdivisions to describe all the different ways Starmer found to break a pledge. There were the grand statements when he was seeking the Labour leadership: economic justice, social justice, climate justice, migrants' rights, putting human rights at the heart of foreign policy. It would be tedious and a little depressing to track the moment at which each aim was jettisoned. There were reversals on policy, forced by backbench rebellion (on welfare) or the first disastrous local election results (winter fuel allowance).

Then there were statements Starmer made that he later claimed not to have meant. In October 2023 he told Nick Ferrari that Israel had a right to defend itself – even if that meant cutting off power and water to Gaza – then a few days later said: "I was saying Israel had the right to self-defence and when I said 'that right', it was that right to self-defence. I was not saying that Israel had the right to cut off water, food, fuel or medicines." Not really a volte-face, more of a squirm.

Starmer, in short, was bad at politics in so many ways. He wasn't a communicator, but nor was he a meticulous or far-sighted planner. He had no backbone, and yet was incredibly rigid. He was extremely tribal in his determination to extinguish the left of his party, and yet he didn't seem to have his own loyal tribe. None of that really matters, since he's unlikely to trouble parliament again, but it matters what we thought we saw in him, and why. Sorry, scratch that: I have lately come to abhor the journalistic formulation "we made the following mistakes". These are simply mistakes I made on my own.

I always claim to want Labour to be truly pluralistic; to discuss its project and purpose meaningfully between the constituency and parliamentary levels; to vote at party conference as if it matters. When it came to it, though, the promise of a candidate who obviated the messiness of pluralism by satisfying every wing just enough was too appealing.

There was also an internalised patriarchalism. I dismissed way too readily the voices that said it was ridiculous, in the year 2020, for the party of equality to have never had a female leader. That absurdity wasn't really about whether any woman in the party was better suited to the job. It was about a failure, over decades, to reflect on where that preference for a middle-class white guy was actually coming from. What qualities of steadiness, credibility and intelligence was I projecting on to him?

It's funny to be returning to the saying that George W Bush famously mangled in a very different political age: "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me". The Keir Starmer who fought the general election had already fooled his original supporters more times than they could count. It was obvious by the time he had his core team in place that it wasn't even technocracy he was promising, it was a Blairite/Mandelsonian project much further to the right of what those politicians were flogging in the 90s. Perhaps I was hoping it was all just a feint to get into power, after which he'd rediscover his radicalism, or perhaps "hope" is just a pretty word for "I would prefer to believe than to participate". So I'll go along with Andy Burnham's "hope in every heart" – it would be churlish not to – but it will be as well as, not instead of, comparing his actions with his promises.

Keir Starmer giving his final speech outside 10 Downing Street in July PHOTOGRAPH: DINENDRA HARIER/SOPA IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Thames Water, here's why I won't pay my sewage charge

Jenny Jones

I can't even remember when I decided to stop paying the sewage element of my Thames Water bill. It might have been after reading this headline from the Guardian in July 2025: "Serious pollution incidents by English water companies rose 60% last year", with the subheading: "Environment Agency records 75 serious incidents among total of 2,800, with Thames Water being worst offender."

Living in London means that my supplier is Thames Water, which makes a profit out of pollution. I decided that if the government wouldn't act, I could at least do my part and not pay for this travesty.

The water companies are not fulfilling their duties and instead they are discharging raw sewage into our waterways and lives. And a huge chunk of my bill doesn't even get spent on fixing these problems; instead it is spent on interest payments for debts and to pay shareholders billions of pounds.

Nothing will change until these companies go officially bankrupt and the quickest way of ensuring that happens is if people stop paying their bills. A few decades ago millions of people did exactly that with the poll tax and the government backed down.

As a Thames Water bill-payer, I felt that it was hypocritical of me to be constantly campaigning on the issue and then meekly paying up. As a Green party member since 1988, and green-minded since my teens, it just seemed wrong not to take a stand.

I wrote to Thames Water and explained that I was very happy to pay the proportion of the bill related to their supplying me with water, but not to the proportion for their dealing with sewage. They wrote back saying that they don't work out the proportions like that between water and sewage. And followed it up with a threatening letter and a vastly increased bill with penalty charges.

Of course the real solution to this problem would be nationalising these companies. Public opinion is firmly in favour of renationalisation, but we've had a Labour government for more than two years, and nothing has really changed. We aren't holding the bosses to account for their failures. We aren't prosecuting them, finding them guilty of illegal dumping of effluent. And the bills are getting bigger while our precious chalk streams are dying, river ecosystems are collapsing and swimmers are being made ill by sewage floating near beaches.

I will continue my own protest. The letters are unpleasant, and there has been mention of bailiffs, so I don't recommend anyone else going into this lightly. I will calmly read all the threatening letters and await the court case against me. Despite having a seat in the House of Lords, I don't have a lot of assets but, win or lose in court, by taking on Thames Water I know I can only win in terms of my own self-respect.

I have drawn a line in the sand. And I hope to win this particular battle.

* **Jenny Jones** *is a Green party peer*

BEN JENNINGS

It's September: time to reset my entire life

Emma Brockes

Are you a January resolutions or a September reset person? The latter has always felt more propitious to me, light of the exhaustion of Christmas and with the weather still on our side. Last week, when the Pavlovian response to buying new stationery (for my kids) kicked in, I found myself following a rote impulse to sort my life out by replacing the bag in the vacuum cleaner and committing to an unsustainable course of personal change. This is it! The beginning of a new way of life, driven by sharp pencils and the crispness of autumn.

I mean, it won't last. But while most of us have read enough advisories cautioning against new year resolutions as durable, somehow September still promises the earth. I can't shake it. As soon as the breeze picks up and the leaves start to turn, I feel my pilot light ignite – and the urge to sign up to unaffordable personal training sets in.

It feels like an ancient response. I'm not writing this while leaning on a dry stone wall or managing my sheepdogs, but still; the sensory changes brought in by autumn surely activate latent energies in all of us. If you can avoid pumpkin spice and survive the costume search for Halloween, September triggers good feelings of renewal via the psychic memory of our serf forebears bringing in the harvest.

Or, in my case, attempting to do 10 minutes of squats and move last night's dishes from the sink to the dishwasher before lunchtime. As ever when trying to implement new habits, the question is how you trick yourself into making them stick. It's like that classic scene from Road Runner, when, running out beyond the edge of the cliff, Wile E Coyote keeps going until he looks down and drops like a stone.

Will a magnetised whiteboard, stuck to the fridge, keep me running on thin air for a bit longer? What about a new trainer, texting me motivational messages – "let's go soldier mode!" – at 7am every day? After all these years of failed resolutions, has the answer to fixing my life really resided in buying sandwich bags for the efficient storage of leftovers?

This is part of the problem, of course: that any commitment to change is used by most of us as a pretext to spend money. I assume that, in medieval times, the serf stockpiling for winter didn't believe that the key to surviving till spring lay in a trip to the Container Store or buying a bar-grade blender.

We can't buy our way into new habits (although, I have to say, my new blender is amazing) unless it's backed up with behavioural changes that come from – who knows?

Panic, probably. Which is why, in spite of all the scepticism, it still feels to me as if the September reset is real. As someone pointed out to me yesterday, it marks the entry point into the spookiest season, which means different things as we age. Influencers can run the clock on our finite number of summers, but as you get older it's the onset of autumn that really turns up the burner on our sense of time passing.

Foreshadowing death, the urge to get an arsing move on at this time of year is strong, and although it's a line or argument that worries me – not least because it means I share psychological traits with eg notoriously crisis-surfing ex prime minister Boris Johnson – I've always considered panic a much underrated motivational force.

And so, this year, I've gone to the literature for help in utilising the September force and discovered there's a whole movement around it. Contrary to new year, when we tank our chances of success before we've even started by creating goals that are too large to achieve, September offers a lower pressure context in which to implement small change.

Small change is good! Small change is, they say, where it all happens. Ten-minute workouts. Going to bed an hour earlier. Being more open to popular life hacks such as "keep a gratitude journal" (no).

If it feels like deckchairs on the Titanic, given the way the world is right now, we can control only what we can control. Will a collapse in the bond market crash all our futures, if the climate crisis doesn't get us first? While I think about that, there's a small chance that if I chip off the crust around the base of the kitchen tap, clear the drift of receipts from the bottom of my bag and put flaxseed into everything I eat, maybe all will be well.

Established 1906

Country diary

Appledore, Devon

Amid the hot grit of the estuarine beach, a cool light glints. Not the habitual shade of mussel shells, nor even the shimmer of sea glass, this is a blue so bright that at first I mistake it for a kind of plastic, perhaps the discarded part of a pair of goggles. I'm about to pick it up when something prompts me to pause, mid-swoop; an inkling that this is not synthetic, but animal.

Looking closer, I see an intricate pattern of concentric circles like a carved inscription on a wave-blue disc. A translucent "sail" rises from the middle. This is the marine hydrozoan, *Velella velella*.

Like a portuguese man o'war, it is not a single animal, but rather collections of polyps working together. They feed on planktonic organisms using tentacles beneath their floating disc. The concentric circles are air chambers, aiding buoyancy. Largely harmless to humans, they don't share the man o'war's sting, but can still cause irritation if touched.

This pelagic species doesn't swim, but instead uses its tiny sail to catch the wind and move with ocean currents, giving rise to its common name by-the-wind sailor. This evocative term, recalling maritime vernacular, highlights its sailing prowess, as do its other common names of purple sail, sea raft and little sail.

The distinctive blue of its disc comes from the carotenoid pigment astaxanthin. As well as providing camouflage against the ocean waves, these pigments can absorb and reflect harmful ultraviolet rays – particularly helpful when you travel along the surface of the sea rather than through its colder depths, and when temperatures are at a record high.

An occasional visitor to UK shores, mass by-the-wind sailor strandings have been reported along the Welsh coast and at St Bees in Cumbria this summer. Driven by strong winds, they more typically arrive in numbers during stormy winter weather, but their increased presence further inland may be due to calmer waters and favourable winds.

Here, there is only one. Grounded, this listless sailor rests, startling in its blueness and veneer of coolness.
Elizabeth-Jane Burnett

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Burnham should defy unions on donation cap

So much for a new way of doing politics. Even before parliament had convened under his premiership, Andy Burnham had already stumbled at the first hurdle (PM drops support for donations cap after lobbying by unions, 27 August).

Despite widespread support for hard caps to political donations, and despite years of affirming support for such measures, a whisper of opposition from the union lobby has produced a screeching U-turn.

It is no use promising to return power to the people via devolution, employee ownership and so on, and then refusing to address the power of the big beasts of the politics of yesteryear. Come on, Andy! If you are to make any impact on reversing the appalling effects of Thatcherite neoliberalism, you are going to need to show more bottle than this. You should immediately support Stella Creasy's amendment – and throw in a commitment to a national commission on electoral reform.
Paul Sawbridge
Ealing, London

● The GMB union's opposition to a cap on political donations raises a question that goes beyond the immediate dispute: when does legitimate defence of an organisation's interests become defence of a political system that gives that organisation disproportionate influence? Trade unions have a legitimate role in politics. But political finance should ultimately be governed by the democratic interests of citizens, not those of organisations. The same principle must apply to wealthy individuals and corporations.

There is a troubling historical precedent. In the 2010 Labour leadership election, the GMB was one of the unions that backed Ed Miliband against his brother, David. David led decisively among Labour MPs and party members, but Ed won overwhelmingly in the union section and ultimately became leader by just 50.65% to 49.35%. The unions did not single-handedly determine that result, but their mobilisation was crucial. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether the GMB has reflected on the consequences of using its organisational power to influence Labour's political direction.

Ed Miliband's leadership was followed by Labour's defeat in 2015, the return of Conservative government and years of austerity. His defeat also formed part of the political sequence that culminated in the Brexit referendum. To say that the unions "caused" these outcomes would be simplistic. But to pretend that their intervention had no consequences would be equally misleading.

The GMB argues that a cap on donations could damage Labour's ability to raise funds from affiliated organisations. That is institutional self-interest. But it should not be confused with the national interest. Britain needs political finance rules that reduce the influence of money and organised interests, whoever they are.
Marcus Hallside
Radlett, Hertfordshire

● I am in favour of both empowering unions and capping donations. The objectives of union donors are widely different from those of the mega-rich donors. While the latter seek self-enrichment, the unions' only aim is to enable a society where workers' rights are upheld and a fair wage is earned, and to increase employment rates. This fits perfectly with the aims of the Labour party: to support everyday working people and provide for those who cannot work. So I say: cap at around £1m to enable unions to donate and to curb the excessive influence of the mega-rich.
Martin Knott
Edinburgh

Diagnosis without treatment is a poor result

The parliamentary and health service ombudsman's findings are stark and sadly familiar (Complaints triple about England's 'complex and inconsistent' services for autism and ADHD, 26 August). A more than 200% rise in complaints, years-long waits, patients paying thousands of pounds for private care when the NHS fails them, and a system so complex that people are routinely denied rights they are legally entitled to – these are exactly the issues that the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) has been documenting and raising for years.

What the ombudsman's report does not fully address is what happens once people are assessed and diagnosed. Too many people with ADHD and autism receive a diagnosis only to find that there is no evidence-based treatment pathway attached to it. Cognitive behavioural therapy is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for the anxiety and depression that commonly accompany neurodevelopmental conditions, and in specific contexts for adults with ADHD itself. Yet workforce shortages mean that even where the clinical will exists, the capacity often does not. A diagnosis without access to appropriate treatment is a hollow outcome.

A final report by the clinical psychologist Prof Peter Fonagy is expected soon and will inform a new national approach. It must go beyond assessment waiting times and address the full pathway, from recognition to diagnosis, treatment and ongoing support. Closing the regulatory gap that the ombudsman identifies is important. Equally important is ensuring that the services people eventually reach are staffed by clinicians with the specialist training to deliver the care that neurodivergent people need.
Helen Macdonald
Senior clinical adviser, BABCP

Banning nuts from the skies is no solution

As the mother of a child with anaphylactic allergies, I am sympathetic to the terror that Lucy Pasha-Robinson describes (A kind society would ban all nuts on planes, 28 August). Indeed, last summer I spent six hours compulsively cleaning on a demonstrably filthy flight. Flight crew handed out wipes to passengers "to clean your tray tables", then proceeded to serve packets of cashews (my child's anaphylactic nut) with drinks. My nerves were shredded by the time we arrived in Chicago.

However, I am firmly against the banning of nuts from the skies. Food bans do not improve compliance, and they create a false sense of security in patients.

Because my son's most severe anaphylactic allergy is not nuts but lentils (which, like peanuts, can be airborne and serious from the tiniest quantities), we have had to learn to live with risk. Time and again, I note his allergies on intake forms, only to be blithely reassured that "we are a nut-free setting", as if that constituted a proper allergy-protection policy. Instead, I am the helicopter parent boarding flights early with gloves and wipes, deep cleaning our entire row before we sit down.

My son knows not to accept food from others and to touch nothing on board until I give the all-clear; we pack meals, pillows and blankets for every flight; brief every flight crew on his allergies and the location of our EpiPens; and, from the age of three, practised administering Epi at least once a month. We will never travel fear-free, but we feel the fear and travel anyway.
Alison Smith
Worcester Park, London

Corrections and clarifications

● An article said analysis had shown that black victims made up 83.7% of unsolved shootings and 73.5% of unsolved stabbings in London, and implied that the incidents occurred in the period from 2019 to 2023. This was based on information in the source report. However, those statistics were actually from the period 2015 to 2024 (Unsolved murders in London mostly involve black victims, 24 August, p13).

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Don't shy away from the language of loss

Polly Hudson writes about how people don't know what to say to the bereaved (27 August). Trust me, the bereaved don't either. My parents died in a car crash. I watched people sheer away in absolute mind-numbing embarrassment, not because they didn't care, but because they were afraid they would make it worse. Well, you can't make it worse, trust me. And we're not looking for poetry. A simple "I'm sorry for your loss" is perfect.
Isobel Cassidy
Ardtrasna, County Sligo, Ireland

● It seems appropriate to write about grief following a bereavement to thank the fellow Guardian letter writers who have contacted me via the letters editor. Their kind words have really helped me over the last few weeks, and are read and reread on a regular basis.
Ian Grieve
Gordon Bennett, Llangollen canal

● My husband, Bob, who died in 2017 from motor neurone disease 20 months after diagnosis, said he found that people who asked "How are you today?" were aware that some days are less shit than others.
Helen Keats
Brighstone, Isle of Wight

● Autumn is a wonderful season, but it's even better in the bleak midwinter (Letters, 1 September).
Andrew Carroll
Castletimon, County Wicklow, Ireland

● I used to resist the temptation to read any letter about nominative determinism. Now I just give in.
Peter Cave
Ilkeston, Derbyshire

● Is it not time to stop this correspondence?
Roger Brake
Shaftesbury, Dorset

John Irvin

Film and television director hailed for the BBC's 1979 version of Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

Bouncing from war zone reportage to cold war espionage, Hollywood horror to Robin Hood swashbuckler, Harold Pinter to Arnold Schwarzenegger, the director John Irvin, who has died aged 86, was nothing if not eclectic. "I'm a bit split," he said. "I like playing with expensive toys, yet I also like the miniatures. I hate being pigeonholed, and I like to do the unexpected."

He enjoyed his greatest success with the BBC's Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (1979), adapted from John le Carré's novel about the intelligence officer George Smiley's efforts to winkle out a Russian mole. Smiley was played with clenched elegance and economy by the formidable Alec Guinness, who took to striking out lines in the script whenever he felt he could convey the necessary information by expression alone.

"I was terrified, knowing I had to spend a year with him," Irvin told Guinness's biographer Piers Paul Read. On the first day of rehearsals, the director offered a suggestion that was rejected out of hand.

After persuading Guinness to try the scene his way, Irvin was vindicated. "Very good, John," the actor said. "Ten out of ten."

There was still Guinness's trepidation to contend with. Phoning Irvin at 3am once shooting was under way, the actor fretted that he "hadn't found Smiley" and said that the part should be recast. On set a few hours later, Guinness walked off in the middle of filming. Irvin brought him back and stood his ground. "We're going to do it in one take," he said of the day's first scene. "Do you understand?"

When Guinness was later asked what he liked about Irvin's directing style, he said: "Balls behind the camera."

The series, described by its producer Jonathan Powell as "a sort of elegy for empire", was seen at its peak by around 8 million viewers (more than 15% of the UK population) and won several prizes, including best drama series in the Broadcasting Press Guild awards.

Interviewing the director in 1986 for Films in Review, Louise Tanner wrote: "There is about Irvin just a hint of a Le Carré hero, the crisp diction, the quiet air of knowing his way around the lands east of Suez."

> **There is about Irvin just a hint of a Le Carré hero**

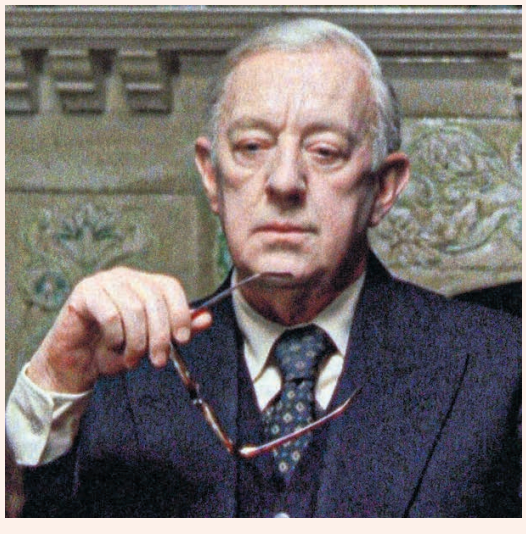
Irvin was unavailable to direct the follow-up, Smiley's People, having been courted by Hollywood since before Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy. His 1977 Granada Television adaptation of Dickens's Hard Times had impressed executives there.

From moles, he moved on to dogs: The Dogs of War (1980), that is, adapted from Frederick Forsyth's novel and starring Christopher Walken as a mercenary helping to overthrow a west African dictator. Stark and uncompromising, the film was hated by Forsyth.

Apparitions were next. Ghost Story (1981) featured an illustrious cast who were famous before Irvin was even born: Fred Astaire, Melvyn Douglas, John Houseman and Douglas Fairbanks Jr played friends harbouring a nasty secret. The New England winter was scarier than any of the film's spectres, Irvin recalled. "When I finished the last shot, I said to Fred, 'It's all over. You can go home to Beverly Hills.'" Astaire replied: "Oh John, I'm so happy. I thought I was going to go home in a box."

Horses followed in Champions (1984), the story of the jockey Bob Champion (John Hurt), dealing with cancer, then reptiles in Turtle Diary (1985), a low-key comedy adapted by Pinter from Russell Hoban's novel, with Glenda Jackson and Ben Kingsley as shy naturalists who plot to liberate giant sea turtles. Irvin compared working with that cast to "driving a Ford Mustang and trading up to a Ferrari".

In directing Schwarzenegger in Raw Deal (1986), he might be said to have swapped the sports car for a bulldozer. One of the Austrian-American action hero's interchangeable shoot-'em-up thrillers, the film cast him as an ex-FBI agent infiltrating the



Irvin on the set of Hamburger Hill in the Philippines, 1986. Right, Alec Guinness as George Smiley in Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy, and Irvin at the Cognac film festival in France, 2006

ALEX BOWIE/GETTY IMAGES; TCD/ALAMY; BERNARD PATRICK/SHUTTERSTOCK

Chicago mob. Even Irvin admitted the movie was "not dealing with the great mysteries of life".

He had hoped for many years to direct a film about Vietnam, where he spent time while making a BBC Omnibus documentary about war photographers. (He had even been shot at on the Laotian border.) When he was offered Hamburger Hill (1987), which focused on the real-life 10-day battle to capture Dong Ap Bia in the A Shau Valley in 1969, it satisfied that desire.

Irvin succeeded in his aim of "[getting] as close as possible to the experience of combat without thrills or moralising. I wanted the audience to be there."

Unfortunately, the audience was fatigued. Oliver Stone's Platoon (1986) dominated the Oscars before Hamburger Hill had even been released, while Stanley Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket (1987) pipped Irvin's film to the post in the US. He claimed in 2021 that Kubrick had been toying with a later release date until he was secretly shown a print of Hamburger Hill by a colour grader working on both movies.

Nevertheless, the critic Pauline Kael believed it to be superior to both Stone and Kubrick's films. Irvin, she wrote, "has the pride of a director who knows what he's doing".

One of twin boys, John and his brother, David, were born in Wallasey – now Merseyside but then part of Cheshire – to Elsie (nee Bending) and Charles Irvin, a mechanical engineer. After the family moved to South Shields in Tyne and Wear, the brothers were educated at Durham school.

Film bewitched John from an early age. "When I was a child, I used to organise my gangs into film units. I was brought up near Newcastle in the same town as Ridley Scott – there must be something about the smell of the fish queues that produces film directors."

He enrolled at the London School of Film Technique (now the London Film School), which was then housed above a butcher's shop in Brixton, south London. Irvin said his mother cried for two days when she learned that he would not, as she had hoped, be pursuing a career as an architect.

After working as an apprentice editor at Rank, he received a British Film Institute grant to make Gala Day (1963), a documentary about the Durham miners' gala, which was then bought by the BBC. Irvin made other documentaries for the corporation as well as for his own company, Mithras Films, which he formed in 1962 with Maurice Hatton.

These included The 26 (1966), about ex-miners who participated in the General Strike of 1926, and the Bafta-nominated Mafia No! (1967), which documented a protest march across western Sicily against organised crime. While making a film about the civil war in Yemen, Irvin lived with Bedouin tribespeople for four months. He was also a film adviser to the Jamaican government in 1963-64.

By the end of the 1960s, his experiences convinced him to leave the documentary film world behind. "I reached the point in Vietnam where I had simply seen too much suffering."

He worked in British television throughout the next decade on series including the The Nearly Man (1974-75), one of several collaborations with the writer Arthur Hopcraft, who went on to adapt Hard Times and Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy.

Irvin's later movies included Next of Kin (1989), starring Patrick Swayze and Liam Neeson as Appalachian brothers out for revenge. Just as Hamburger Hill got lost amid other Vietnam movies, so his Robin Hood (1991), with Patrick Bergin in the title role and Uma Thurman as Maid Marian, was overshadowed by Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, which starred Kevin Costner and opened a month later to far greater fanfare.

The Hells Angels provided unlikely inspiration for Irvin's earthy take. "Robin and his men must have terrorised Nottingham like a motorbike gang," he said. There was not much the director could do, however, when Bergin fell ill. "We had to hide the problem from the studio," Irvin said, "because otherwise they would have stopped the production."

He continued to demonstrate his versatility. The chocolate-box prettiness of Widows' Peak (1994), a whimsical comic mystery starring Joan Plowright and Mia Farrow, and his adaptation of HE Bates's A Month By the Lake (1995), with Thurman and Vanessa Redgrave, were followed by the thrillers City of Industry (1997), starring Harvey Keitel, and Shiner (2000), with Michael Caine and Martin Landau as rival boxing promoters.

He also returned to combat in the television film When Trumpets Fade (1998), set during the dying days of the second world war. Mandela's Gun (2016) dramatised Nelson Mandela's stint as a guerrilla fighter for the ANC.

At the time of his death, Irvin was working on Water from an Ancient Well, a documentary about his friend the musician Abdullah Ibrahim, who died in June.

"To me, being a director is the most privileged existence," said Irvin. "It's bloody hard work, but when it's going well, it's like having the best table in the restaurant."

He is survived by Emilie, Luke and Amy, the children from his marriage to Sophie (nee Litchfield), who died in 1991, and by two grandchildren, Finn and Isla.
Ryan Gilbey

John Charles Greenway Irvin, film director, born 7 May 1940; died 11 August 2026

Lord Horam

MP and minister who switched parties three times in the Commons

Just about every parliament in modern times has thrown up MPs who change parties, but there have been very few such as John Horam, Lord Horam, who represented three parties in the House of Commons and furthermore served as a minister for two of them.

Horam, who has died aged 87, never reached cabinet rank but was a junior minister in James Callaghan's Labour administration in the late 1970s and, after a peregrination with the Social Democratic party in the 80s, then served in the Conservative government of John Major in the 90s.

Winston Churchill, who entered parliament in the early 1900s as a Conservative, switched to the Liberals and then, 20 years later, became a Tory again, said: "Anyone can rat but it takes a certain amount of ingenuity to re-rat." Horam deployed a different Churchillian phrase: "It is better to change your mind than be wrong all the time." However, it did not stop him being greeted by the Labour leftwinger Dennis Skinner as a "dirty double-rat" when Horam rose.

Born in Preston, Lancashire, John was the son of Catherine (nee Harkness), who ran a dress shop, and Sydney Horam, a fitter with Leyland Motors. He was educated at Silcoates school in Wakefield, where he became head boy, and studied economics at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, before joining the marketing department of Rowntree's in York, where he played a small part in developing the After Eight mint in the 60s.

He then worked as a journalist for the FT and the Economist before founding the Commodities Research Unit in London, with Robert Perlman, supplying data to mining companies.

Horam had joined Labour at the age of 15 after hearing a speech by Hugh Gaitskell, who would become the party leader in 1955, though if there was a common strand in his politics it was as an economic free marketeer and opponent of incomes policy on the party's rightwing. As a young MP, elected first for Gateshead West in 1970, he was actually a Tribunite anti-Common Market candidate, positions that he would change with time. While he was later in favour of the European Union, he became a supporter of capital punishment, and an opponent of divorce law reform and lowering the homosexual age of consent.

In a reshuffle in 1976, Callaghan appointed Horam a junior minister in the Department for Transport, serving under Bill Rodgers, who would become one of the leaders of the breakaway SDP. There he began piloting legislation through the Commons to make seatbelts compulsory and presided over the widening of a stretch of the M1.

After the election defeat, Horam, like others on the right of the party, grew disenchanted with Labour's leftward drift and, while he served in Denis Healey's shadow Treasury team, he left the frontbench after Michael Foot became leader.

He was the first MP to join the Gang of Four's Council for Social Democracy in January 1981 and was one of the first 13 to sign up with the SDP two months later. His constituency was abolished in a reorganisation and when he fought Newcastle Central in the 1983 election came only third.

By the mid-80s, Horam felt that the SDP was becoming like a mark two Labour party: higher spending, higher taxation and an incomes policy, "a botched job – Labour without the loonies".

The Tories beckoned and, after discreet talks with Thatcher and Norman Tebbit in March 1987, drawn by their "realistic economic strategy", Horam announced he was joining them.

David Owen, the SDP leader, said he was relaxed about the defection. Although it was too late to find a seat for that year's election, Horam was back in 1992 as MP for the Conservative constituency of Orpington.

In 1995, Major appointed him junior minister for public services and science and eight months later moved him to the Department of Health. Still contrary, he had spoken out against the imposition of VAT on fuel and the euro.

The Tories' defeat in 1997 ended his ministerial career. He then served as chair of the Commons' environmental audit committee, as a member of the foreign affairs select committee and on the backbenchers' 1922 Committee. He retired from the Commons at the 2010 election and was given a peerage three years later.

Horam was married twice, in 1977 to Iris Crawley and, after their divorce, in 1987 to Judith Jackson, a former Guardian and Sunday Times motoring correspondent.

She survives him, together with her two sons, Lincoln and Fraser, from an earlier relationship.
Stephen Bates

John Horam, Lord Horam, politician, born 7 March 1939; died 24 July 2026

It is better to change your mind than be wrong all the time

Horam canvassing for votes in 2005 when he was the Conservative MP for Orpington MARTIN GODWIN/THE GUARDIAN

Birthdays

Geoff Arnold, cricketer, 82; **Noah Baumbach**, writer and film-maker, 57; **Sarah Bradford**, biographer, 88; **Caryl Churchill**, playwright, 88; **Fearne Cotton**, television presenter, 45; **Kiran Desai**, novelist, 55; **Mario Draghi**, former prime minister of Italy and former president, European Central Bank, 79; **Sir Nick Gibb**, former Conservative MP and schools minister, 66; **Malcolm Gladwell**, author and journalist, 63; **Prof Peter Goddard**, physicist, 81; **Al Jardine**, musician and singer, 84; **Steve Jones**, rock guitarist, 71; **Susan Milan**, flautist, 79; **Sam Raphael**, professor of international relations and human rights, University of Westminster, 49; **Josie Rourke**, former artistic director, Donmar Warehouse, 50; **Charlie Sheen**, actor, 61; **Sir Gareth Southgate**, former England football manager, 56; **Shaun White**, snowboarder, 40.

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

8	2	4	6	1	7	3	5	9
9	5	7	4	3	2	6	1	8
3	1	6	9	8	5	2	7	4
7	6	2	5	4	8	9	3	1
1	3	9	7	2	6	8	4	5
5	4	8	1	9	3	7	2	6
2	7	1	8	6	4	5	9	3
4	8	3	2	5	9	1	6	7
6	9	5	3	7	1	4	8	2

Medium

8	9	4	5	7	6	3	1	2
2	7	6	3	1	4	8	5	9
1	5	3	2	8	9	7	4	6
3	8	7	9	4	1	2	6	5
6	4	2	8	5	7	1	9	3
9	1	5	6	3	2	4	7	8
4	2	9	7	6	8	5	3	1
5	6	1	4	2	3	9	8	7
7	3	8	1	9	5	6	2	4

Codeword

P	R	O	V	E	R	B	■	T	I	T	L	E
O	■	U	■	X	■	I	■	O	■	H	■	L
O	P	T	I	C	■	S	U	N	R	O	O	F
L	■	S	■	L	■	T	■	I	■	U	■	■
■	L	I	Q	U	O	R	■	C	I	G	A	R
A	■	Z	■	D	■	O	■	■	■	H	■	A
C	L	E	R	I	C	■	W	H	I	T	E	N
I	■	■	■	N	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	S
D	A	M	A	G	E	■	S	T	U	C	C	O
I	■	O	■	■	■	G	■	C	■	A	■	M
C	A	D	E	T	■	A	W	H	I	L	E	■
■	■	E	■	W	■	T	■	B	■	Y	■	H
J	A	S	M	I	N	E	■	A	M	P	L	E
A	■	T	■	L	■	A	■	C	■	S	■	W
R	O	Y	A	L	■	U	N	K	N	O	W	N

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 30,101

■	C	■	S	■	Q	■	■	T	■	S	■	W
B	A	R	N	O	W	L	S	■	H	Y	E	N	A	S
■	T	■	U	■	E	■	T	■	R	■	A	■	L	■
G	A	N	G	■	R	E	A	S	O	N	A	B	L	E
■	C	■	■	■	T	■	T	■	W	■	N	■	E	■
C	O	W	B	O	Y	■	E	N	T	R	E	A	T	Y
■	M	■	R	■	■	■	N	■	H	■	M	■	■	■
■	B	R	E	A	K	A	■	R	E	C	O	R	D	■
■	■	■	A	■	E	■	I	■	■	■	N	■	E	■
C	A	T	S	E	Y	E	S	■	B	E	E	T	L	E
■	S	■	T	■	B	■	L	■	O	■	■	■	I	■
P	L	U	M	T	O	M	A	T	O	■	L	A	C	E
■	A	■	I	■	A	■	N	■	K	■	U	■	A	■
A	N	T	L	E	R	■	D	R	A	G	R	A	C	E
■	T	■	K	■	D	■	■	T	■	E	■	Y	■	■

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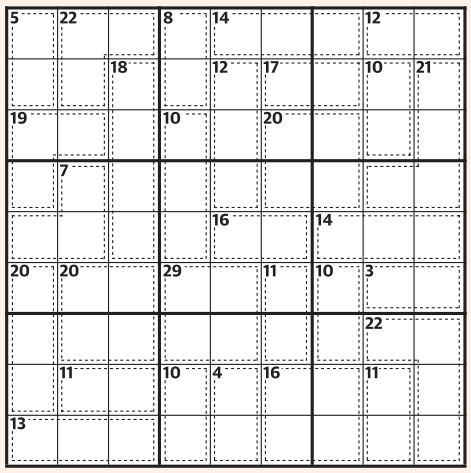
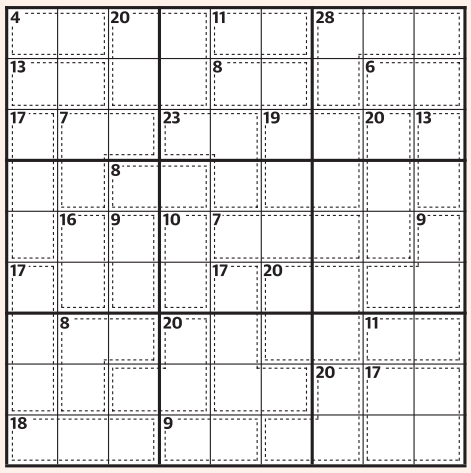
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.



Medium



Codeword

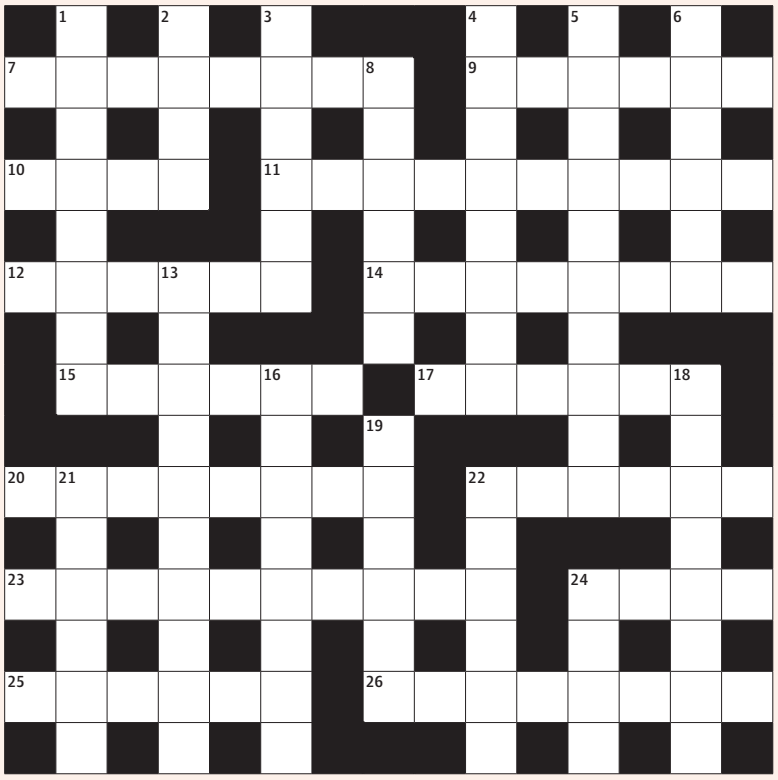
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

10	15	8	12	■	15 A	■	18	■	2	22	23	17
■	23	■	4	12	21	21	15	12	6	■	2	■
22	24	7	1	■	7	■	14	■	22	24	15	22
2	■	24	■	6	24	14	14	21	17	■	4	■
6	15	6	■	12	■	■	■	■	26	2	15	19
■	25	■	20	21	15	10	17	15	2	■	■	■
15	25	15	22	■	23	■	4	■	12	5	17	19
■	12	■	17	15	22	6	17	7	10	■	8	■
15	8	12	7	■	17	■	6	■	17	13	12	10
■	■	■	5	16	17	15	10	17	19	■	21	■
18	17	17	22	■	■	■	■	21	■	25	17	3
■	20	■	12	6	25	24	22	13	■	12	■	16
5	24	13	11	■	22	■	24	■	15	22	10	1
■	5	■	17	21	17	5	10	24	22 R	■	24	■
10	16	2	19	■	10	■	15	■	9	6	24	3

~~A~~ B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q ~~R~~ S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 A	16	17	18	19	20	21	22 R	23	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 30,102 set by Brockwell



Across

7 Wrestler's trick with bad acne (4,4)
9 Small opening in *Gogglebox* you once rejected (6)
10 Sample from Lulu apparently repulsed my colleague (4)
11 Musicians performing late in ancient city (3,7)
12 Stuff clinging to the back of Pete Best? (6)
14 Militant going into business with John Denver here (8)
15 Ducks once more coming back for rest (6)
17 German band love Foreigner, but not in a nice way (6)
20 Child cuddling cross monster (8)
22 Every year songbirds going west over the hill (4,2)
23 Ground doesn't vex a Manchester United manager (4,6)
24 Put on endless party (4)
25 Prime minister's note opened by billionaire (6)
26 Number 19 nailing 501 (8)

Down

1 Imposing women arrange bets (8)
2 Particular canine abandoned by waterway (4)
3 Car rentals regularly in competition (6)
4 Derisive remark about my Picasso? (8)
5 Fruit recipe stopping tennis ace going bananas (10)
6 Top ambassador interrupting ball (6)
8 Means business (6)
13 One who may charge money around statue (10)
16 3 characters in hotel ate ridiculously (8)
18 Islander's fine home about to get washed out (8)
19 Blue Ivy Carter initially supports Beyonce's latest nonsense (6)
21 Console gutted Modigliani over pictures (6)
22 Long track in evergreen forest (6)
24 *The Sun* ringing Brockwell for dirt (4)

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The Guardian
Thursday 3 September 2026

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The hidden life of Mr T

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PASS NOTES
№ 5,043

The Eyes Wide Shut conspiracy

Age: The erotic psychological thriller Eyes Wide Shut starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman was released in 1999.
Stanley Kubrick, no? Yes. It was the great film-maker's final movie. He died of a heart attack just days after screening his final cut to Warner Bros. His sudden death is what started it all.
Started all of what? The conspiracies.
Oooh, go on. OK, so there are rumours that the studio cut 20 minutes of the film after his death, including an alternative ending.
Why would they do that? It was too dark apparently. The theory goes that in Kubrick's original, Cruise and Kidman's characters sacrificed their daughter to a child sexual abuse ring.
Perhaps it was a premonition of the Pizzagate theory? Make that Jeffrey Epstein.
Seriously? That's what they say.
That's what who say? There was an episode of Joe Rogan's podcast a couple of years ago in which the screenwriter Roger Avary said the film had been cut.
Was Avary involved in the making of the film? No, but on Rogan's podcast he claimed that "as a student of Kubrick" it looked to him as if EWS had been cut after Kubrick's death.
And those comments helped fuel the rumours that Kubrick may have known about Epstein's crimes, or possibly some other cult involving the global elite? Precisely. It doesn't help that Kubrick was no stranger to conspiracy theories. It's claimed that he staged the first moon landing, then alluded to it in The Shining.
Of course. Back to EWS, what do people who worked on the film say? Nigel Galt, the movie's editor, said in an interview that nothing was cut. And now Vivian Kubrick, Stanley's daughter, has weighed in. She worked with him on several films.
And Vivian says? It's a long X post, including: "I never heard of a missing 20 minutes at the time, I have never subsequently seen or been shown any evidence that such a section existed, and I know of no surviving material that establishes that it did."
That doesn't rule out the possibility, though, does it? She goes on to say: "If indeed 20 minutes had been removed, I definitely would have found out about it eventually." And she tags @joerogan and adds hashtags including #EpsteinFiles, #GhislaineMaxwell, #SexTrafficking and #ConspiracyTheory, just to be clear who she's talking to.
Do say: "Hmmm, should I believe family and the film's editor, or a load of people on Reddit?"
Don't say: "What do you think, Joe Rogan?"

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: NOLIS ANDERSON/THE GUARDIAN. THIS PAGE: NATALIIA SIROBABA/ALAMY

Adrian Chiles

I've learned the longer it takes to cook, the less you want to eat it

If you ever meet someone from North Macedonia and find yourself short of conversation, then one word will get things going nicely. That word is *ajvar*. Pronounce it "Ivor", as in The Engine - not quite right but it'll do. Depending on who you ask, ajvar is a condiment, spread, sauce or relish. It's made - also depending on who you ask - with red peppers and aubergine. You can eat it with meat, cheese, fish, vegetables, on toast or, using a large spoon, straight from the jar.

I was accompanying a 13-year-old called Ilijana as she played the British chess grandmaster Nigel Short in Split, Croatia. Long story. All you need to know is that my contribution to the contest was zero. All I could do was try to bond with her by finding some common ground. So I said the magic word: ajvar! This was the conversational equivalent of a chess move - something with a knight perhaps? - which she didn't see coming. It worked a treat. Suddenly she was all smiles, telling me how her grandma's ajvar was the best in the world.

Ajvar is a Balkan thing, but it is especially common in North Macedonia due, I assume, to an abundance of red peppers there, ripening nicely even as we spoke. Ilijana was one of a couple of dozen young players taking on Mr Short. As he made his way around the other boards I quizzed her about ratios of peppers to aubergines, the right oil to use, the cooking process and so on. She seemed happier discussing this than trying to answer my daft questions about the rudiments of chess tactics. My dad used to say that in chess you need to be thinking five moves ahead, whereas he was always five moves behind. Same. But on matters concerning ajvar, I was now right up to speed.

By the time I got back from Croatia, I was champing at the bit to make some of my own. My junior chess friend suggested 5kg of peppers was about right for a batch. Further research made it clear that only pointy peppers would do. The bloke in the world foods shop in Swansea registered no surprise, or indeed interest, at the quantity I was after. With a kilo of aubergines added to the box, I was in business.

First came the charcoal grilling of the vegetables. My neighbours have one of those fancy Egg barbecues which they very kindly got going for me. Aware of the fire risk, I was relieved the rain was steady. It took me about two hours to blacken all the skins. I found the first 10 minutes of the process quite enjoyable. The last hour and 50 minutes, less so. My fingers were singed and all the tong-wielding had my right arm begging for mercy. Those Macedonian nans must be made of girders.

Then everything had to be skinned, which took longer than I might have hoped. Then drained overnight. Then chopped up, and cooked down, while slowly adding sunflower oil and salt and stirring, stirring, stirring for three hours or more. During this period, as the molten lava spat blobs of fire at me, my feelings for ajvar went from strong love to something approximating dislike. The longer you cook something, the less you end up wanting to eat it. I cooled it and put it in sterilised jars, marvelling at how a box of peppers I could barely carry had ended up filling only four jars. Exhausted, I went to bed, but all I could see on the inside of my eyelids was a cauldron of seething red stuff.

Day three, without relish, I tried my relish. It was quite good, but food and drink from your travels never tastes quite the same at home. I hope to rediscover my love for ajvar soon. I've a fair amount to get through.

▼ *'I found the first 10 minutes of the process quite enjoyable. The last hour and 50 minutes, less so'*

Couldn't put it down? I could barely pick it up

Back when I was a dilatory student of English literature, I chose my authors for the shortness of their canon. OK, Thomas Hardy was in there, but I'd already read a couple of his for my A-level. Otherwise, I found the intellectual allure of brevity irresistible. No Dickens for me. Arthur Hugh Clough and Christina Rossetti were more my thing.

My penance since then has been to read some of the weightiest tomes ever written, sheer length offering effective cover for a literary dilettante. I tackled War and Peace and found much to enjoy. But in a novel north of 550,000 words, to have found nothing to enjoy would have been to my discredit, or Tolstoy's, or the pair of us.

This summer, after an on-off battle of 10 years, I finished Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia by Rebecca West, first published in 1941. The word count is given as a little less than Tolstoy's tome, at roughly half a million. Although my hardback copy of War and Peace weighs 1,132g, while my paperback edition of Black Lamb and Grey Falcon comes in at 1,271g. Never mind the word count, feel the weight.

Reading a doorstopper is like running a marathon - the hard labour is all but forgotten the moment you cross the finish line. It's also like listening to a long piece of experimental music, in that the rare bits that make sense sound so much sweeter for being surrounded by random din.

West's sweet spots in the 1,271g of her Yugoslavian travelogue are certainly worth the effort. To pick but three, how about: "These people hold that the way to make life better is to add good things to it, whereas in the west we hold that the way to make life better is to take bad things away from it." Or her description of a Montenegrin chief of police as having "a face so tough and imperturbable that one could have played darts on it".

Best of all, though, is this: "And what has happened there? The answer is too long, as long indeed, as this book, which hardly anybody will read by reason of its length." Well Rebecca, I did - I read it all. And it was no great hardship, far from it.

‘My job is to love people’

Rocky III made Mr T a star; The A-Team put him on millions of TV screens. But behind the cartoonish image was something more complex – and surprising

Simon Hattenstone

Mr T explains why he’s late, but he wants to make one thing clear – this is not an apology. “You caught me in my devotion, and nothing comes before God. So I won’t say I apologise for the delay. I just want you to know that God comes first in all my life. For allowing my success, I give God the glory.”

He is here to discuss a new Netflix documentary, Untold Mr T: I Pity the Fool. At 74, he rarely gives interviews. But when Mr T decides to talk, he really does talk. What Mr T thinks, Mr T says. And I’ve never heard anyone trash the very thing they’re here to promote quite like Mr T does today.

The actor, former wrestler and cultural icon is full of surprises. Perhaps the most surprising is that he’s still famous. As he says, he has no right to be. It’s more than 32 years since he participated in a wrestling match. Thirty-five years since he had a significant acting role in a TV show. Thirty-nine years since he starred as BA Baracus in The A-Team, and 44 years since Rocky III – the only TV show and movie he’s really remembered for. And yet, somehow, he’s still a household name.

In the 80s, many boys and girls wanted to grow up to be Mr T. The A-Team was shown all over the world. This action-adventure TV series about four US army special forces commandos turned mercenaries became a huge hit and helped define the era.

The movie star George Peppard was supposed to be the show’s headliner. But much to Peppard’s chagrin, Mr T proved far more popular. His BA (Bosco Albert or Bad Attitude, take your pick) Baracus was a mechanical genius and problem-solver; a peerless brawler and human battering ram, who wore an African Mandinka-style haircut, rattled with gold chains and had a pain threshold second to none. In some ways, BA Baracus and Mr T were similar. In others, they couldn’t have been more different.

Born Lawrence Tureaud, Mr T grew up on the south side of Chicago, in poverty. His minister father left home when he was five, leaving his mother, Willie, to bring up their 12 children. The family survived on her work scrubbing floors for the wealthy, and welfare. Lawrence was known to his brothers and sisters as Little T. When he was growing up, everyday racism had a devastating impact on him. He was horrified by the disrespect most white people showed his family.

Aged 18, he changed his name to Mr T. “Let me explain that,” he says. “See, everything I do there is a reason behind it. My father was a minister and I watched him being called Boy. And I watched my uncle being called Boy. I watched one of my brothers who was a marine come home from Vietnam in his beret and uniform, and some white guys were calling him Boy. So at 18 I had to register for the draft. I said, if I’m old enough to fight and die for my country, I’m old enough to be respected as a man, so I self-ordained myself Mr T at first. Then I legally changed my name to Mr T later on, so the first word out of everyone’s mouth would be Mr.”

We meet on a video call. At 74, he looks wonderful. He’s wearing a stars and stripes bandana and a T-shirt that says Lord’s Gym, illustrated with a picture of Jesus doing press-ups with the crucifix on his back. His face, less full than it once was, is magnificently creased and creviced, with laughter lines galore.

Mr T is part preacher, part poet, part pugilist. Close your eyes and you could be chatting to Muhammad Ali in his prime. It’s all there in the rhythm of his speech, the wit and wisdom, the fighting talk. And yet, over the decades, he has often been portrayed as a muscle-bound meathead. He says if he had been that, his mother would never have forgiven him.

He takes me back to his earlier years at school. Sure, he wanted to be tough like his bigger brothers, and hoped to be a successful footballer or boxer. But even more importantly, he wanted to pass his exams, because Willie had taught him the importance of education. She told him how the abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who was born into slavery, had been taught to read by the wife of his enslaver, “and then his slave master told her: ‘Don’t teach a slave to read, because if you do, he won’t be a slave much longer.’” Education was the route to freedom.

What did he study? “Philosophy and theology. A teacher in high school said, there’s no money in that, and I said: ‘Sir, that’s disrespectful. That’s insulting, because not everybody’s about money.’ They didn’t take the time to know who I am.” I tell him I’ve been reading a lot about him, but it’s the first I’ve heard of him studying philosophy and theology. “See, that’s the problem. I’ve told journalists the same thing I’ve told you, but they don’t print that. They didn’t want people to know what Mr T is like. I was born and raised in the ghetto, but the ghetto was not born and raised in me. We was poor financially, but we was rich spiritually. I never robbed nobody, I never raped nobody, I never broke into nobody’s house. I never snatched a purse.”

‘If you don’t know me, you’re gonna think I’m some monster’

By the age of 15, he was a celebrated school athlete and looked like an adult bodybuilder. But his peers mocked him. “Growing up in the ghetto, even though I played football and wrestled, the thugs called me a sissy. You know why? Because I never robbed nobody.” He talks louder and louder. Soon he’s shouting. “They called me a sissy for listening to my mother, for listening to the teachers, for doing my homework. They didn’t go to school. They was dropouts. They was thugs. They’re in jail now or dead. They didn’t become nothing. As the Bible says: ‘Unless two agree, they can’t walk together.’ I told my mother I was going to be something in life. I was going to buy her a house and pretty dresses. They wasn’t going anywhere.” At times like this, he reminds me less of Ali and more of Samuel L Jackson’s Jules Winnfield in Pulp Fiction.

▲ *'I was born and raised in the ghetto, but the ghetto was not born and raised in me' … Mr T*

PHOTOGRAPHS: NOLIS ANDERSON/THE GUARDIAN; ALAMY; COLLECTION CHRISTOPHEL/ALAMY

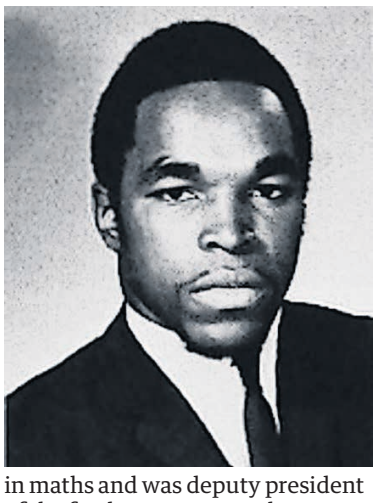
Except Mr T's Bible quotes are for real, and they focus on the loving aspect of the Old Testament rather than the hellfire and damnation.

Despite all this, the new Netflix film zeroes in on a violent incident that happened when Mr T was in his teens. In the documentary, he describes how some local thugs robbed his mother of her welfare money, and he knocked their teeth out with the butt of a rifle, and told them that was just the start of it. He leaves the story hanging.

I mention this and he scowls. "There is too much emphasis on that scene. These thugs kept on robbing poor black women, who didn't have no recourse. So we did what we was supposed to do. We'll leave it like that. We don't have to get into gory detail. You touch my mother, you got to pay. Bottom line. Then I would have been a real sissy if I *didn't* take care of it." But he's not proud of what he did. "Revenge on the guys went against my God's teaching, because Jesus said, vengeance is mine. But then we wasn't dealing with the Bible stuff. It's Dodge City. Somebody got to pay. Case closed. There's nothing else to talk about. We're going on to the next thing."

Did the guys live to tell the tale? "We're going on to the next thing." Silence.

After college, he won a football scholarship to Prairie View A&M University, a predominantly Black college in Texas, where he majored in maths and was deputy president of the freshman year. But he was thrown out in 1971 for being part of a protest and uprising against the expulsion of the editor of the student newspaper, The Prairie View Panther. Photographs from the time show a very different Mr T – a smart-suited, clean-shaven student.



◀ *A yearbook photo of Mr T*

◀ *As Clubber Lang in Rocky III with Sylvester Stallone*

He returned to Chicago, did manual jobs (janitor at a local bank; housekeeping at a hotel) while attending local colleges on athletic scholarships. In 1975, he joined the military police corps of the US army and was named top trainee out of 6,000 recruits. He left the army in 1978 with an honourable discharge and, after a knee injury destroyed his dream of playing in the National Football League, he started working as a bouncer.

This is when he developed his look. He was working at Dingbats nightclub, and accumulated gold chains from patrons who dropped jewellery or left it behind after late-night fights. His image was carefully cultivated. The gold, he says, was his way of reclaiming history. Instead of wearing chains of steel, as his forefathers had, he'd wear chains of gold. "People were concerned that I had too much gold and they asked me if it was too heavy. Nobody said to my ancestors: 'That pregnant lady shouldn't be in chains.' Nobody cared about that, but all of a sudden they're worried about this Black man, Mr T."

The jewellery and haircut were a way to attract attention, he says. "See, my mother and father taught me it takes a smart man to play dumb. In order to catch a rat, you gotta have cheese, so they want to see this man with the gold, with this funny haircut. Who is this guy? So they give me a chance, and I slip my message in. Maybe he looks crazy, but he's not crazy. Now I've got your attention, I can tell you about me."

Mr T became a personal bodyguard to the stars, including Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, Steve McQueen and Muhammad Ali. I ask who he was closest to. He gives me an I'd-have-to-kill-you-if-I-told-you look. "No, I don't want to name names. Everybody protected was important to me, 'cos it's a life. If there was a gun, I'd take the bullet; if there was a knife, I'd be stabbed." Did he ever take a bullet or knife for anybody? "No, no, no, it didn't come to that. But if it had, I was ready."

He had first met Ali as a 16-year-old. "I was a sophomore in high school. One of my teachers knew Muhammad Ali, and told him about me and he came to my school. He said, 'I want the baddest kid in the school to meet me in the gym', because I'd just won the city wrestling championship. Ali became my hero because he stood up during the Vietnam war and said: 'I have no quarrel with the Viet Cong, they never called me nigger, so why are we fighting the Viet Cong?'"

In 1980, Mr T won an NBC show called America's Toughest Bouncer. The thing is, he says, there were tougher men than him in the competition, but they didn't have the right motivation. "I didn't win because I was the roughest or toughest or baddest – there were some *tough* guys there. True, you had to be a little tough, a little physical, but I won because I had

Continued on page 6 →

← Continued from page 5

a greater cause than the other guys. One guy said, if I win I'm gonna buy a car, another said he was gonna party. I said, when I win I'm gonna feed the homeless in the community."

It was on this show that casting director Rhonda Young spotted him and suggested him to Sylvester Stallone for Rocky III as his antagonist Clubber Lang. Mr T's performance is astonishing, not least because he had never acted before and many of his lines were improvised. (Most famously, when he taunts Rocky by telling his wife: "Bring your pretty little self over to my apartment tonight, and I'll show you a real man.") It was in Rocky III that he first said "I pity the fool," which became his catchphrase. The film was the second highest grossing movie of 1982, ranking only behind ET the Extra-Terrestrial.

Mr T was on a mission, but he insists it had nothing to do with stardom. "My pastor, Reverend Henry Hardy, said: 'When you are in Los Angeles filming Rocky III find a place that you can minister to.' So when I was out there I got connected to this homeless centre called the Midnight Mission." Half a century on, he can still reel off the names of the other shelters he worked with when making Rocky – the Fred Jordan centre and Union Rescue Mission. "I brought them food and clothes. They didn't know who I was. Because we were filming Rocky III, I brought a lot of Nike stuff. I left it at the door. Eventually at the Midnight Mission they found out who I was and they asked if I'd come in and pray and deliver a sermon, so I started preaching there."

A year later, in 1983, the A-Team started and Mr T became a global superstar. It was shown in more than 70 countries, and he soon became the best paid cast member, much to Peppard's annoyance. He then became a global superstar twice over as the figurehead for the US's most high-profile anti-drugs campaign.

"The president and his wife, Nancy Reagan, hear about me telling the kids 'Don't do drugs', telling the kids 'Don't rob and steal', and Nancy Reagan says 'Mr T would be good for my programme Just Say No'. So they check your background. And when they check my background, it blew them away. They said: 'Wow! He grew up in the ghetto, his mother brought them up on welfare and food stamps and they have no police record! Run that check again!' They run that check again. 'And one of his brothers is a Chicago police officer, another brother is a Chicago fireman, how do they do that?'" Mr T answers his own question for me. "Because we love and respected our mother." There is a famous campaign photograph, taken in December 1983 at the White House, with Mr T dressed as Father Christmas, while Nancy Reagan sits on his knee and kisses his forehead.

In 1985, he became a global superstar thrice over when he starred in the first WrestleMania with Hulk Hogan at Madison Square Garden. Liberace was the guest timekeeper and Ali was the special "outside" referee. By now, you couldn't move for Mr T merchandise. There were Mr T dolls, Mr T fancy dress sets, Mr T cereal, Mr T lunchboxes, and a Mr T cartoon series.

▲ *First lady Nancy Reagan with Mr T in December 1983*

Does he think Peppard, who reportedly called him "the worst actor on the set" and refused to address Mr T by his name, was jealous of him? "My mother taught me to take the high road. I don't want to get into that. My job is to love people, and I did. I always respected him. See, I don't have to hate nobody. How can I claim to be a man of God if I'm hating somebody?"

I was surprised, before our interview, when Netflix told me how much Mr T loved the documentary and how keen he was to promote it. The film suggests that his descent was as rapid as his rise, fuelled by poor decisions and bad behaviour. When I mention this, he tells me it's a fake narrative. The truth is, he says, he didn't want to act any more. "I don't want to sound cocky or conceited, but if I never made another dollar, if I was never on TV again, all I ever wanted to do is done." What was that? "All I wanted to do was buy my mother a beautiful house and pretty dresses. I done that in the 80s, so the game was over. It was done. I was already walking away. When they called me for the A-Team, I was at the wrap party for Rocky III. I was told, 'the producer wants to meet you', and I was like, 'I'm going home, my work is done. I've done Rocky III, I'm going back to what I did.' My mother told me: 'Son, there are some things that money just can't buy.' Like the poem says, if you can walk with kings and queens and not lose your common touch then you will be a man, my son. How many people have sold their soul to the devil, chasing money? I'm not chasing the dollar. I never did."

'My life is like a rose. You gotta get past the thorns to get to the beautiful rose'

The problem with the Netflix film, he says, is it focuses on the hardman stereotype and ignores the real Mr T. "The documentary pissed me off, because they didn't cover a lot of stuff. When I saw it I was like: 'What the heck?' It's garbage. You build me up, then you try to punk me out. I said: 'Wow, man, I'm more than that.' Two days they interviewed my pastor, and he gets 30 seconds [on screen]." In his view, "That's what we call, in the black community, a white man wanting to change the story and control the narrative. If you don't know me, you're gonna think I'm some monster."

Mr T appears most unhappy about the prominence given to his former agent, Peter Young. He says they fell out and claims he sued him after discovering that Young was allegedly putting his name to contracts Mr T knew nothing about.

Meanwhile, in the documentary, Young says Mr T made terrible decisions, citing the film Freaked, a comedy set in a sideshow, in which he played the Bearded Lady. Young says Mr T walked away three days before the film wrapped.

▼ *A Mr T action figure*

▼ *Melinda Culea, Dwight Schultz, Dirk Benedict and Mr T in The A-team*

▼ *With Sylvester Stallone and Hulk Hogan in 2005*

▲ *In the Netflix documentary Untold Mr T: I Pity the Fool*

"I didn't have no problem playing Freaked, because we were going against the typecast," Mr T insists. "Brooke Shields was in it, Keanu Reeves was in it, Randy Quaid was in it. It was a fine role, but he's putting me down for being in it. He wants to cut Mr T down. The time that it took to put that part [of the documentary] on, you could have had my pastor speaking about the people I changed in the community, but you don't show that." To be fair, the documentary does show a bit of that. He starts addressing me as if I made the film. "You see what I mean? Why don't you show Mr T working with the Make-A-Wish kids, why don't you show Mr T being in the army? So we show Mr T tough, and then you show Mr T as the Bearded Lady. See, that's an agenda. It was a hidden agenda, they had to undercut what I'm about. What a joke!"

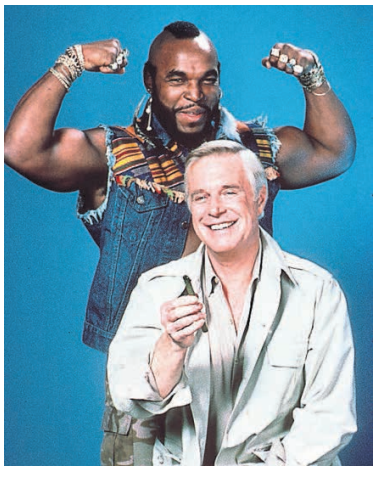
He's not done yet. "Here's the bit that really pisses me off. Me and my manager did a conference call with Scott [Weintrob, the director] and he says: 'What about Peter Young?' And I said: 'We had to sue him, so no, nothing to do with him.' Then we started to ask Scott: 'OK, we wanna see some footage of what we're doing, because when we do a movie we see dailies.' But he didn't show it to me. We started filming last year at Easter. I didn't see the finished product until a month ago. I didn't see nothing on film. So now I see it, I say: 'God *dammmmmmmmmn*, ain't this something.' We told them 'Don't put Peter in my doc', but he did."

When he finally saw the film, he says he had to pray for self-control. "I said: 'Lord, don't let me go off. *Don't let me go off.*' 'Cos I wanted to go off on Netflix. And I thought: 'If I go off in here, it's not going to be pretty.' I said: 'Take the high road.' So I took the high road."

A message is flashing on my screen from the Netflix rep, who is listening in on the interview, pleading with me to change the subject. But Mr T isn't quite done. I've asked about the comment in the film that he would only turn up to events if a white limousine was booked for him. "What's wrong with white limousines? Shouldn't I have a choice of colour? I wear white underwear. That makes me a bad guy? Let's get real here. I wear white T-shirts sometimes, does that make me a bad person? I wear white socks. So what's the beef about that? Sure, I like a white limousine. When Elvis Presley died he had a white limousine, so why can't I have one while I'm living? But Mr T's a bad guy. We don't care about him feeding the homeless, but, you know: 'He wanted *a white limousine,* he wanted a *certain kind of soap in his hotel room*. *Wow, he's a bad guy.*'"

Mr T is spitting with fury. "I'm not supposed to tell you what I like? I'm just supposed to take what you give me? No, no, no, no, brother, it don't go like that. 'When he became successful, he told 'em if they don't fly his whole family, he ain't flying,'" he says, as if quoting his critics. "That's what I told them, too. My family is coming along. If they're not part of it, I don't do the deal." Sure, he got the best deal he could, he says, because he was in a position to, and he knew his worth.

▼ *With George Peppard, his co-star in The A-Team*



We asked Netflix, Weintrob and Young whether they wanted to comment on the views Mr T has expressed about the film. Young replied: "Please give Mr T my best, and let him know I forgive him." Netflix and Weintrob have so far declined to comment.

I try to change the subject, and I tell him I love his daughter Erica's comedy. (She is one of his three children, and a former teacher.) "I don't go to see the comedy because it's got four letter words in it and stuff," he says. He's still seething at Netflix. I ask him what he's doing at the moment, and he tells me he's visiting family in Chicago and spending time with the Pacific God Mission. "Once or twice a week I take them hand and foot warmers, 'cos it's so cold. See, my life is like a rose. You gotta get past the thorns to get to the beautiful rose. So I take all the garbage, the lies, the lawsuits. As my brother would say, in a fight: 'That's all you got?'" Somehow the anger has dissipated and calm is restored.

He says he's so grateful for the difficulties he has faced in life – his childhood poverty and the T-cell lymphoma that almost did for him in the 1990s. And there's been plenty worse than a film that doesn't treat him with sufficient respect. "You ain't gonna hear me crying the blues about 'we was treated rough'. Life ain't supposed to be easy. That made me who I am. I think of Maya Angelou's poem. She said: 'Still I rise.' So, whatever you throw at me, I gonna rise from that. If you give me lemons, I'm gonna make lemonade. If you give me crap, I'm gonna make fertiliser."

I ask him if it's true that he stopped wearing gold after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Yes, he says. After helping with relief work in Louisiana, he felt it would be disrespectful to display his wealth while thousands of people had lost everything. Has he started wearing it again? "Sometimes I wear gold. Maybe one earring. I don't need gold now. My heart is gold. You know why I don't need to wear gold? The gold got you attention. Like making an announcement '*Attention! Attention! Attention!*'" And now he's grinning like a little boy. "So, now you got the attention, slowly people know about this guy Mr T. They know his rap; they know what he stands for."

I tell him I'm going to expose him for having a cute smile, and it will ruin his reputation. I get another flash of it before it turns into a hammy snarl. "Then I'm gonna say: 'Don't believe what they say.'"

Netflix asks me to wind up, though it seems as if he could chat for ever. He's barely taken a breath in almost two hours. I've never met a septuagenarian with a set of lungs like Mr T. OK, just a few more questions I say.

Is there a lady in his life at the moment? (In the mid-80s he and Phyllis Clark, the mother of his three children, divorced.) "Oh, there are a lot of ladies in my life. There's my daughter, my sisters, my nieces. And then there's the ladies at church." I ask Mr T if he is teasing me? "Yes, I am. Actually, there is a lady in my life, yes. We're about to get married. Yes. Now, go with that." What's her name? "I ain't gonna tell you. I gave you enough now."

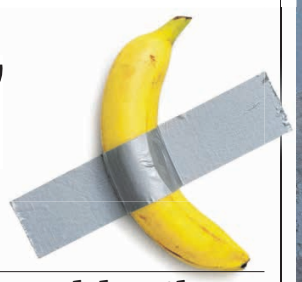
If he got offered a decent role in the next Rocky film would he take it? "No, no, no. I'm doing what my calling is. The money I made allowed me to have this free time."

Has he got much money left? "No. Let's say I'm broke, because that sells better. People want to hear, he's broke and he's run out of money. It works better." I tell him I don't want to say it if it's not true. He's grinning. "You have no choice. I'm not going to open my wallet to you. See, if I've got God, I've got all I need anyway. All I wanted to do is done – buy my mother a house and pretty dresses. I am complete. I. Am. Complete. All right brother, God bless you."

Untold Mr T: I Pity the Fool premieres globally on Netflix on 8 September

PHOTOGRAPHS: PR IMAGE; COURTESY OF NETFLIX; E CHARBONNEAU/GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO 12/ALAMY; PICTURELUX/THE HOLLYWOOD ARCHIVE/ALAMY; DIANA WALKER

‘My work has always been serious’



He is famed for creating a gold toilet and a $6m banana. But, says Maurizio Cattelan ahead of a major Berlin show featuring Hitler and the pope, there is more to his work than pranks

Deborah Cole

Maurizio Cattelan, the art world’s merriest prankster, pauses when asked which object in his sprawling new Berlin show is most likely to be defaced, stolen or eaten, then emits a foghorn of a laugh. “There is no need to vandalise anything,” says the trim, soulful Italian, explaining that he has already taken care of all that, given how the work cuts villains, imposters and straw men down to size. “But,” he says, referring to the show’s more daring works, “maybe we need someone to resuscitate people.”

Cattelan, who speaks in a lilting English, grins broadly, a mischievous glint in his brown eyes. Speaking on the subterranean level of Mies van der Rohe’s weightless Neue Nationalgalerie (NNG) in Berlin, he darts between the impish and the profound in conversation, mirroring the dizzying range of his work. The silver-haired sculptor is best known for duct-taping a banana to a wall in 2019 and calling it Comedian, in a droll commentary on the excesses of the art market. The joke became even funnier when it sold for $6.2m, then hilarious when its buyer took a bite out of his purchase and swallowed it.

There was also the gold toilet, called America, that was installed in New York’s Guggenheim in 2016, its curators later offering the piece to Donald Trump’s White House instead of the Van Gogh that it requested. Thieves later made off with the 18-carat loo when it went on display at Blenheim Palace, Winston Churchill’s Oxfordshire birthplace.

“It’s rare to be with an artist who’s recognised on the street,” says NNG director Klaus Biesenbach. “He reached a level of accessibility with these very easy-to-communicate ideas: ‘Oh God, a person puts a banana on the wall and it’s sold for six million!’ He is a very deep thinker who camouflages seriousness with humour, and who camouflages the sublime with irony.”

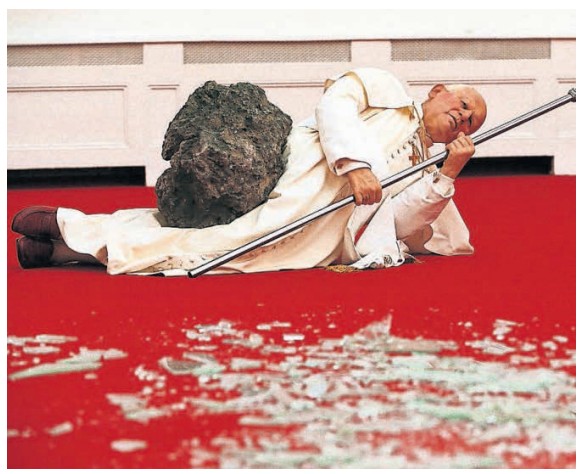
Night, Cattelan’s first major solo exhibition in Germany, was granted to him as winner of this year’s Neue Nationalgalerie prize honouring influential contemporary artists. Cattelan collaborated with curator Lisa Botti on new commissions, as well as selecting historic works from the past three decades, noticeably skipping over his greatest hits. “They were part of a different conversation,” he says. “My work has always been serious. The problem is people often stop at the joke.”

The show spotlights the wax and wane of power, the contentiousness of collective memory, and the horror and hope of history, as symbolised by its scarred and vibrant host city. “Night,” he says, “is a beautiful title. We sleep, we love, we dream, we fear. It’s a moment where things get fuzzy. And after night, there is dawn and another day. But it’s definitely a suspended moment – a magic moment.”

At the entrance, peering down from the roof, the 2003 work Never features Oskar, Günter Grass’s eerie child witness to the Nazi era from his novel The Tin Drum, silently beating out his warning. Purgatory, created for the show, presents a stunted-scale version of Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate as an ambivalent landmark, a portal for visitors to rethink their engagement with European history.

Him, from 2001, features a diminutive kneeling man who is revealed to be Adolf Hitler in a prayer-like pose, facing off against 2007’s Dawn, a female figure with real human hair, her hands pinned in a crucifixion pose. Overhead, thousands of stuffed pigeons are absorbed by the black ceiling. They, for Cattelan, are “a menacing presence”, though Botti adds: “It’s also about the holy spirit, about looking up. It’s a bit of optimism.” Then there’s La Nona Ora, or The Ninth Hour, an infamous work from 1999 showing Pope John Paul II resplendent in ceremonial garb, having been struck down by a meteorite.

The Hitler piece Him has been Cattelan’s most lucrative, selling for $17.2m in 2016. It had courted controversy in Warsaw, where it was displayed on the site of the wartime ghetto, recalling the day in 1970 when West German chancellor Willy Brandt dropped to his knees in front of the city’s Monument to the Ghetto Heroes to beg forgiveness for the crimes of the Nazi era. The Simon Wiesenthal Center called Cattelan’s work “a senseless provocation”.



▲ *‘The problem is, people often stop at the joke’ … Cattelan*

▲▲ *Comedian, the $6.2m banana*

◀ *‘My Catholicism comes out when I don’t want it to!’ … The Ninth Hour*

‘I suffer when making a show – but I love the rush. It’s a fix, a dependency’

Cattelan is satisfied the Night exhibition is in the right place at the right time, lending the works fresh power. He confesses to a certain obsession with the darkest chapters of German history, but primarily for the universality of their nightmarish resonance. "Hitler in this case represents evil," he says. "It could have been Genghis Khan or another very popular, very famous leader." He is unafraid of the possibility of a Berlin audience questioning his right to borrow from German iconography, "like if I was wearing rasta hair or something". Cultural appropriation, he believes, is a "very American" accusation.

Cattelan calls the NNG "an incredible building" and considers this modernist masterpiece with its famously windswept plaza "a major contributor" to the show. "There is no separation between inside and outside here," he says. "I had to find a way not to dominate it, not to be dominated but to have a conversation. I connected with the idea of a church. My Catholicism comes out when I don't want it to! But this time it came out as a structure, on this idea of central axes through the exhibition." Botti describes Cattelan's work as "comic existentialism", saying: "You laugh about something, but then the laugh gets stuck in your throat."

His work comments on an era of crumbling social structures and disinformation, created by an artist who divides his time between Trump's US and Italy under hard-right prime minister Giorgia Meloni, choosing New York and Milan as his bases. "Internationally, there is now a resurgence of people asking for more strong leadership: Meloni is a very cunning and astute politician." Expressing a grudging admiration for her unusual staying power, he says: "It's disappointing to think that the left weren't able to produce, in all the occasions they had, such stability. What didn't they have that she has?" He suggests an answer: scapegoats. "We have always these enemies that are offered to us. They give us problems that probably we don't have. But nobody has the magic wand."

Cattelan was born to a working-class family in Padua, a historic city 40km west of Venice, and famously had no formal art training. Having Berlin put on one of his most ambitious exhibitions in years has felt like a kind of homecoming, given it's now 20 years since he co-curated the fourth Biennale, a barn-burner of a show that made the most of the now-restored capital's "poor but sexy" era.

"Maurizio really participated in Berlin becoming Berlin," says Klaus Biesenbach, director of the NNG, calling that 2006 biennale "a watershed moment for this city" and its creative scene. Cattelan believes Berlin "still carries scars, history, contradictions – it's a sort of outdoor experiment". He credited it with helping him recapture part of his youth, his days spent as a postman, a mortuary attendant and a sperm donor. "Berlin definitely was about clubbing," he says. "It was very interesting because in Berlin stuff can grow overnight, last like a mushroom for a few days and then disappear. [Clubbing] was something I didn't experience during my 20s or 30s. I had a serious … well, four or five years of taking back lost time. It was beautiful, it was very raw. Now it's over again. The city became more mature."

For Cattelan, the 2010s brought a highly publicised retirement, then a ferocious comeback. "At that time, it was like that pressure, the anxiety, the making of the shows we were producing – you reach a level where it's like" – he makes a drowning sound – "where you have to raise a white flag."

Each major exhibition sends him on a rollercoaster of exhilaration and panic, he says, admitting to being "extremely desperate" while planning Night. "Do I suffer? Yes, I don't like it. It's always a challenge. I still need the rush. It's a contradiction, but I love the hate of making a show. It's a fix. It's a dependency. Maybe a therapist would say, 'We can solve your addiction problem.' And I'd say, 'No, no, I love it.'"

I wonder, given the death of David Hockney, another epochal figure of the art world, if Cattelan has given any thought to his own legacy, but he does not seem to envision a future in which his work endures. "I don't have a foundation," he says. "I don't have a studio, never had. I also don't have a family. A legacy would be like being so conscious about yourself that you have these constructions."

However, now being in his 60s, he says: "Maybe I should think about who I want to pass my problems to. I'm super lucky. I did have doubts [as an artist]. But I jumped into the void and said, 'If we overcome fear, there will be a fantastic dawn. A fantastic dawn.'"

Maurizio Cattelan: Night is at Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, from 10 September to 7 March

◀ *A $17.2m kneeling Hitler is Cattelan's most controversial – and lucrative – sculpture*

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTIAN JUNGEBLODT/THE GUARDIAN; © 2025 MAURIZIO CATTELAN; DOMINIK PLUESS/AP; ATTILIO MARANZANO

Roberta Bayley

'Joey Ramone didn't surf. And he didn't like this photo. He said, "You made my legs look thin." Like that was my fault!'

The first band I ever saw were the Beatles, on 19 August 1964 at the Cow Palace Arena near San Francisco. I was 13. I remember every 29 minutes of it: 17,000 screaming girls making a deafening din and thousands of flashbulbs going off at once, lighting up the entire stadium. I'd been a Beatlemaniac since seeing a clip of them at the London Palladium on the Jack Paar show, then live on the Ed Sullivan show. I bought magazines with them in and wondered what kind of person took the photographs. So my first forays into photography were taking photographs of photographs of the Beatles with the primitive family Kodak.

When I was 15 I took a very basic photography class, but later, after three years of college, I dropped out, sold my Nikon and went to England. I started dating Ian Dury, then after we broke up, a friend gave me a one-way ticket to New York where I started going out with Richard Hell, whose band Television played CBGBs every Sunday night. Richard and I split up on good terms, and he asked me to take pictures of him. My first was the famous fake blood photo of the Heartbreakers, the band he formed with Johnny Thunders and Jerry Nolan from the New York Dolls. Richard suggested captioning the poster "Catch them while they're still alive" because they had a nefarious reputation.

In January 1976, I started taking pictures for Punk magazine. I was working the door at CBGBs by that point, so I was always in a position to take photos of the bands playing there: Television, Talking Heads, Blondie and, of course, the Ramones. Sire Records paid me $125 to shoot them against a wall for their first album cover. We were friends, so there was no hair or makeup and I wasn't telling them how to pose. I shot three rolls of film and one shot happened to be perfect, but my most popular photo is this one of Joey on the beach at Coney Island.

Punk magazine did a "fumetti" – an Italian style of comic strip – starring Joey and Debbie Harry as star-crossed lovers, with speech bubbles in their photos. Andy Warhol was the mad scientist and [music journalist] Lester Bangs played a biker. John Holmstrom did a drawing of Joey for the cover. This Joey photo wasn't used because he was smiling at the camera – breaking the fourth wall – but it's just kind of a perfect picture. It's unusual because he's carrying a surfboard and Joey didn't surf! We were just having fun at the beach. There's a childlike aspect because he was shy. Looking like that, he knew there was no other path for him than rock'n'roll, so he'd got in a band as soon as he could.

I'd read that for shooting outside you should use Plus-X film, but this session is the only time I ever used it. Most photographers used Tri-X, because you got a better range of light and dark. Buried to the right of Joey is a Schaefer beer can, a New York beer that's no longer made, which is a cool touch. Joey didn't like the photo – he said, "You made my legs look thin." Like it was my fault he had skinny legs.

Also, the Ramones never smiled. Sire used a vertical shot from my album session where they're smiling, with the caption: "The Ramones: they're so punky, you're gonna love them." They wanted them to be this cute band that would appeal to Bay City Rollers fans, but Joey went, "No way. Bury that picture. Never use it again." After that they never smiled in photographs again, but I have this one on top of my bookshelf and it makes me very happy. I think other people like it for the same reason.

I sell more of it than the album cover photo. Eddie Vedder has a copy. Karen O has one in her kitchen. Andrew Watt, the superstar producer of Paul McCartney and the Rolling Stones, has it. I never wanted to become a professional photographer taking pictures of people I don't know. For 98% of my career I never got paid but I had a lot of fun. I was just taking photographs of my friends.

Interview by Dave Simpson. Roberta Bayley is the recipient of the Icon award at the 2026 Abbey Road music photography awards

THE CV

Born: Pasadena, California, 1950
High point: Maybe taking the Ramones' album cover
Top tip: Photograph what you really like, because then if you're not successful, at least you'll have photographs of what you love

REVIEW BY LUCY MANGAN

Stolen Babies

The cruelty of forced adoptions is laid bare in this unsparing film

★★★★☆

BBC Two

The scale of the suffering at first threatens to make you numb to it. The 90-minute documentary Stolen Babies opens with a bald statement of verified fact: "Between 1949 and 1976 over 250,000 unmarried mothers in the UK were forced into handing their newborn babies over for adoption." State apparatus facilitated this every step of the way, supported by religious institutions. These institutions ran, or were involved with running, the mother and baby homes to which the girls and young women were banished ("They do not quickly acknowledge themselves as sinners," notes one report on its inmates), along with self-proclaimed moral welfare societies and the NHS.

The statistics are appalling. The details are worse. Some of the women became pregnant by boyfriends. Some were victims of rape. Joan Chambers was 14 when a teacher took her for a walk in the woods. "I trusted him, I really did … All I remember was the pain. I honestly didn't know what was happening."

Ann Keen was 17 when she went on a date with a salesman from the factory she was working at. "In today's term," she says hesitantly, "it was without consent. You couldn't say that in the 60s." Doctors and nurses refused to speak to Keen while she was in labour, and they denied her pain relief – including when she was stitched up after the birth – so that she would "remember it and not be a bad girl again". Her baby was taken away eight days later. "And you'll never see him again," a midwife gleefully told her, before putting the teenager in a bath and starting to squeeze her breasts: "I'm getting rid of the milk. You won't be needing this."

Chambers gave evidence at her teacher's trial when she was nearly eight months pregnant. "Children are so apt to make up taradiddles and wicked invention," the judge advised the jury. "You will not allow sympathy for the girl to cloud your judgment." The teacher was found not guilty. During the birth she was "absolutely torn to shreds". Her baby was taken from her three weeks later and she was told to go and strip the bedding from his cot, ready for the next one.

The dehumanisation and cruelty is unfathomable. To say that it is the result of different attitudes is only to push the bafflement back a stage: how could anyone privilege the importance of marriage over the right of a mother to keep her child; how could class – it was overwhelmingly young working-class women's babies being given to middle-class couples – be such a blinding factor; how could religious belief have such a chokehold on a society that rage-fuelled punishment could be visited on women with barely a murmur of reproach; how could babies be treated like commodities?

But so it was, and social historian Dr Michael Lambert has the evidence, which would be used alongside the women's testimonies as the Sunday Post journalist Marion Scott broke the story of the scandal after a long investigation. Painstakingly gathered from thousands of council and state records of the adoptions, of reports from mother and baby homes up and down the land, it is, he says, "evidence of a system designed to supply infants". It's also tangible proof of what the women's stories have told us: that at every level, written through the national psyche like poisonous letters through a stick of rock, was the idea that women are lesser beings and that "fallen" women are the very least of them all.

Marion McMillan, whose mixed race son stayed with her for nine months because most families wanted white babies, has spent 20 years supporting mothers like her and campaigning for government apologies. Nicola Sturgeon supplied one from McMillan's native Scotland in 2023, and Keir Starmer followed suit this year. The women speak of it as a release from the shame that has pursued them down the decades. The suffering visited upon them all seems incalculable.

Adoption law changed after 1976 and put an end – or the beginning of an end – to the grey and hidden market in babies from young, unmarried, poorer women to affluent older couples. Contraception cutting off the supply seems to have been a more immediate factor than changing attitudes, but minds always take longer than bodies to respond to change. Whether you feel the writing through the rock reads truly differently today – looking at rape statistics; state neglect and underfunding of women's services; authorities' complicity in ignoring gangs of groomers and predators in recent decades – is up to you.

◀ *'The statistics are appalling. The details are worse' … Marion McMillan with her son*

What's On
Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews and news direct to your inbox every Monday

WHAT TO WATCH

Taskmaster
9pm, Channel 4

Taskmaster is often funnier when one contestant has stagey contempt for the whole project. Step forward Richard Ayoade *(above)*, who makes his intention to do the bare minimum very clear in this opener. A mere 22 seasons in, the show remains an effortlessly enjoyable way to spend an hour – the other comics making up the cohort are Chloe Petts, Isy Suttie, Nina Conti and Matt Lucas. **Phil Harrison**

Renovation Rescue
8pm, Channel 4

This latest variation on the home improvement show continues with more renovation wrongs being righted by Vogue Williams and Luke Mabbott. They're in Nottingham, where they learn from Sylvia and Dave that even minimalist designs can go wrong. Worse still, Sylvia has been diagnosed with a serious health issue. **PH**

The Yorkshire Vet
8pm, Channel 5

Who knew bulls could get sunburn? Clearly, as temperatures soar across the UK, nothing is off the table. The latest episode of this cheerfully entertaining series sees Shona Searson looking after a breeding animal who has forgotten to slap on the suncream. Meanwhile, Julian Norton is wary when a 12ft Burmese python arrives at the practice. **PH**

A House Through Time
9pm, BBC Two

David Olusoga wraps up the history of a beautiful Georgian home in Edinburgh from the 1930s through to the present day. Current residents Morag and Henrietta are delighted to hear it was once "a house of ill fame", but there's sadness as Olusoga traces the poverty and war, then the threat of demolition in the 1960s. **Hannah Verdier**

Fightland
9pm, Sky Atlantic

The pulp boxing gangland thriller continues, with Duke (Howard Charles) in a tighter spot than ever since his promoter and drug-dealer nemesis Kingsley (Nicholas Pinnock) has proved elusive. As he hurtles towards a disastrous meeting with some tough Russians, drastic action is required. **Jack Seale**

Hit Point
9pm, U&Dave

The gritty west London crime thriller continues as the two fugitives do a runner with the missing millions, while their dangerous rivals (including Peter Serafinowicz in a cuddly hat) close in to claim their share. Elsewhere, framed innocent Kieran threatens to spill the beans, putting Leo's double life in jeopardy. What's a bent cop meant to do? **Ali Catterall**

BBC One

6.0 Breakfast (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Rip Off Britain (T) **11.30** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Money for Nothing (T) **2.45** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **4.30** The Answer Run (T) (R) **5.15** Pointless (T) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Dragons' Den** (T) Pitches include alcohol-liberated wine, a new retail venue and all-natural, plant-based ice-cream.

9.0 **Ludwig** (T) John gets sidetracked while gathering intel for Lucy's upcoming assignment by the murder of an influencer in the heart of Cambridge.

10.0 News (T)
10.30 Regional News (T) Weather
10.40 FILM **Creed II** (Steven Caple Jr, 2018) (T) Adonis Creed faces off against Viktor, the son of Ivan Drago. Drama, starring Michael B Jordan and Sylvester Stallone.
12.40 The Repair Shop: Beyond the Barn (T) (R) **1.40** Weather (T) **1.45** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 Garden Rescue (T) (R) **7.15** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **1.30** The Edge (T) (R) **2.15** Weatherman Walking (T) (R) **2.45** Animal Park (T) (R) **3.30** Dogs in the Wild: Meet the Family (T) (R) **4.30** Vintage Antiques Roadshow (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Great British Railway Journeys (T) (R) **7.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R)

8.0 **The Big Deal With Steph McGovern** (T) The contestants are split into teams, with one half travelling to Berlin, while the rest stay in London.

9.0 **A House Through Time** (T) Featuring the Ruggs family, who were witnesses to the first German attack on mainland Britain in 1939.

10.0 **Red Dwarf** (T) (R) Rimmer forces the crew to spend 12 weeks in quarantine.
10.30 Newsnight (T) Weather
11.05 Emergency 24/7 (T) (R)
12.05 FILM **Respect** (Liesl Tommy, 2021) (T) Biopic of soul singer Aretha Franklin, starring Jennifer Hudson.
2.25 Sign Zone: Vigil (T) (R)
3.20 This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 Good Morning Britain (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Deal Or No Deal (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Millionaire Hot Seat (T)

8.0 **Emmerdale** (T) Bear talks to Sarah, and Kim is concerned.
8.30 **Coronation Street** (T) Debbie experiences a brush with the past on a visit to the salon.

9.0 **Long Lost Family** (T) New series. Decades after painful family separations, Avril and Marie seek answers. Presented by Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell.

10.0 News (T) Weather
10.30 Local News (T) Weather
10.45 The Late Debate (T)
11.15 **Unbelievable Moments Caught on Camera** (T) (R) A Miami estate agent rescues a woman from alligators.
12.10 Shop on TV **3.0** The Staircase (T) (R) **4.05** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** The Chase Around the World (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.30 The King of Queens (T) (R) **7.45** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) **11.10** Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (T) (R) **1.10** The Great House Giveaway (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** The Great B&B Challenge (T) (R) **5.0** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **6.0** A New Life in the Sun: Where Are They Now? (T) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **Renovation Rescue** (T) In Nottinghamshire, Sylvia and Dave need help after having sunk £250,000 into what is still a building site three years on.

9.0 **Taskmaster** (T) New series. Richard Ayoade, Isy Suttie, Matt Lucas, Nina Conti and Chloe Petts compete in the comic competition.

10.0 Celebrity Gogglebox (T) (R)
11.0 24 Hours in Police Custody: The Ambush (T) (R)
12.15 Crime Scene Cleaners (T) (R) **1.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **2.0** FILM **Our Friend** (2021) (T) Fact-based drama. **4.05** Jamie: Eat Yourself Healthy (T) (R) **5.0** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **5.50** Countdown (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 Milkshake! **9.05** Entertainment News (T) **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.30** Storm & Alexis (T) **12.30** Live Snooker: British Open 2026 (T) **5.30** News (T) **6.25** Car Pound Cops (T) (R) **7.0** Cycling: Vuelta a España 2026 (T)

8.0 **The Yorkshire Vet** (T) Shona Searson attends to Pedro the bull, who has a bad case of sunburn, while a 12ft Burmese python with a serious eye problem arrives.

9.0 **Benidorm Is Murder** (T) A farewell party takes a deadly turn when a guest is stabbed to death during a blackout. Last in the series.

10.0 Killer at the Crime Scene (R)
11.05 Killed By Our Daughter: The McCullough Murders (T) (R)
12.20 Street Cops (T) (R) **1.30** Cruise TV (T) (R) **2.30** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (T) (R) **3.20** The Highland Vet (T) (R) **4.15** Yorkshire With Jane McDonald (T) (R) **5.15** Ben and Holly (T) (R) **5.35** Paw Patrol (R) **5.50** Mixmups (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Fred Dibnah's Building of Britain** (T) (R) The castles of north Wales. **7.30 Villages By the Sea** (T) (R) The Welsh village of Porthgain.

8.0 FILM **The Italian Job** (1969) (T) A crook recruits a gang to steal $4m in gold bullion in central Turin. Crime comedy, starring Michael Caine, Noël Coward and Benny Hill.
9.35 **Talking Pictures: The Godfather Trilogy** (T) (R) Celia Imrie goes through the BBC's archives to tell the story behind the films.

10.20 FILM **The Godfather** (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) (T) Gangster drama, starring Marlon Brando and Al Pacino.
1.10 Talking Pictures: 70s Legends Part I (T) (R) **2.0** Talking Pictures: The Godfather Trilogy (T) (R) **2.45** Fred Dibnah's Building of Britain (T) (R) **3.15** Villages By the Sea (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm The Catch Up **7.05** Deadly 60 **8.0** The Cruise **9.0** Amanda & Alan's Italian Job **10.0** RuPaul's Drag Race UK **11.15** Smoggie Queens **2.10** Paddy & Molly: Show No Mersey **2.40** RuPaul's Drag Race UK

U&Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.25** Top Gear **8.20** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.20** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **10.20** Rick Stein's Road to Mexico **11.20** Yukon Gold **12.20** Top Gear **1.20** Top Gear **2.20** Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing **3.0** Speed With Guy Martin **4.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **5.0** Rick Stein's Road to Mexico **6.0** Rick Stein's Secret France **7.0** Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing **7.40** Would I Lie to You? **8.20** Would I Lie to You? At Christmas **9.0** Hit Point **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Taskmaster: Champion of Champions **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** Would I Lie to You? At Christmas **2.0** Hit Point **3.05** Richard Osman's House of Games **3.35** Judge Romesh **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Modern Family **6.55** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **7.0** Couples Come Dine With Me **8.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **10.0** America's Funniest Home Videos **12.0** The Simpsons **2.0** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **5.0** The Simpsons **7.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **8.0** Ladies of London: The New Reign **9.0** Gogglebox **10.0** Sarah Millican: Late Bloomer **11.0** First Dates: Valentine's **12.05** Naked Attraction's Best Naughty Bits **1.10** Gogglebox **2.10** Ladies of London: The New Reign **3.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **3.55** The Simpsons **4.20** The Goldbergs **5.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.35** Modern Family

Film4

11.0am FILM Lifeboat (1944) **12.55** FILM The Shepherd of the Hills (1941) **2.55** FILM Guadalcanal Diary (1943) **4.45** FILM Canyon Passage (1946) **6.35** FILM Charlotte Gray (2001) **9.0** FILM 12 Years a Slave (2013) **11.40** FILM Kingsman: The Secret Service (2015) **2.15** FILM Crawlspace (2022)

PBS America

6.0am Teleshopping **8.0** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **8.35** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **9.35** Ancient Apocalypse **10.40** Forgotten Allies: The Search for Burma's Lost Heroes **11.45** Ancient Egypt: Life and Death in the Valley of the Kings **1.0** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **2.0** Ancient Apocalypse **3.05** Forgotten Allies: The Search for Burma's Lost Heroes **4.10** Ancient Egypt: Life and Death in the Valley of the Kings **5.25** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **6.25** Ancient Apocalypse **7.35** Forgotten Allies: The Search for Burma's Lost Heroes **8.35** Ancient Egypt: Life and Death in the Valley of the Kings **9.55** Secrets of the Royal Palaces **10.55** Ancient Apocalypse **12.0** Forgotten Allies: The Search for Burma's Lost Heroes **1.0** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **2.0** Teleshopping

Sky One

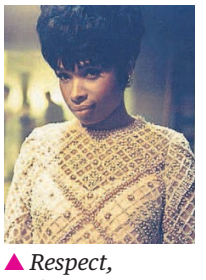
6.0am Mornings With Ridge and Frost **8.0** Stargate SG-1 **10.0** La Brea **11.0** The Simpsons **12.0** Africa's Hunters **1.0** Hawaii Five-0 **3.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** The Simpsons **6.0** Superstore **7.0** The Simpsons **8.0** Rob & Romesh vs Crufts **9.0** An Idiot Abroad 3 **10.0** Rob Beckett: Giraffe **11.45** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **12.30** The Paper **1.05** The Paper **1.35** Road Wars **2.0** New Zealand Spy **2.30** New Zealand Spy **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** S.W.A.T

Sky Arts

6.0am Nutcracker **7.45** Artist of the Year: Masterclass **8.15** Artist of the Year: Masterclass **8.45** Tales of the Unexpected **9.20** Tales of the Unexpected **9.55** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Faye Dunaway **12.0** Classic Albums **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour **3.0** Stories from the National Portrait Gallery **4.0** Discovering: Vincent Price **5.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2024 **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** Discovering: John Hurt **9.0** Spymasters: The Great Spy Writers **10.0** The Myth of Marilyn Monroe **11.0** The Directors **12.0** Sean Connery vs James Bond **1.15** Discovering Romance on Film **2.45** Art Traffickers: Treasures Stolen from the Tombs **3.45** National Trust: National Treasures **5.0** Stories from the National Portrait Gallery

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Fish Town **8.0** Billions **10.15** The Last of Us **12.30** Homicide: Life on the Street **2.20** Billions **4.30** The White Lotus **5.35** The White Lotus **6.45** The Last of Us **7.50** The Last of Us **9.0 Fightland 10.0** Dune: Prophecy **11.15** All Her Fault **12.20** The Five-Star Weekend **1.20** The Five-Star Weekend **2.05** Gomorrah: The Origins **3.10** Gomorrah: The Origins **4.10** Urban Secrets



▲ *Respect, BBC Two*

Radio

Radio 3

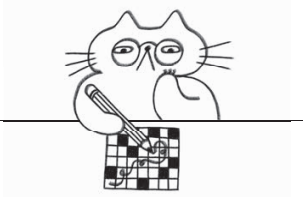
6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. From the Proms, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla conducts the Oslo Philharmonic in excerpts from Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet. Plus, the BBC Young Musician winner, pianist Ryan Wang, plays J Strauss/ Adolf Schulz-Evler's Arabesque on Themes from the Beautiful Blue Danube. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Élisabeth Jacquet De La Guerre (R) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** BBC Proms 2026. Live from the Royal Albert Hall, Kirill Petrenko conducts the Berlin Philharmonic and violinist Augustin Hadelich in Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D and Scriabin's Symphony No. 3 in C minor, "The Divine Poem". **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** What Did the Normans Ever Do for Us? Katie Razzall asks why the Norman conquest still matters today. **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Food Programme. Dr Annie Gray investigates how the Norman conquest has influenced the way modern Britons eat and drink. **11.45** You Do Not Have to Say Anything (R) **12.0** News **12.04** Scam Secrets. A look at email security. (6/8) **12.32** Dough. How weightloss jabs could be making gyms less relevant. (2/5) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** A 9/11 Story: A Chance Meeting. The hijackers' neighbour is questioned at Scotland Yard. (4/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Edith Swan-Neck and the Bayeux Tapestry. Jonathan Myerson's dramatisation of the making of the Bayeux tapestry, with Hattie Morahan and Rosie Sheehy. **3.0** Open Country. Alison Mitchell witnesses a cricket match on a sandbank in the Solent. (3/7) **3.27** Radio 4 Appeal: Mesothelioma UK (R) **3.30** Word of Mouth. The impact of the Norman invasion on the English language. (2/6) **4.0** You're Dead to Me. Greg Jenner is joined by Dr Erin Goeres and comedian Alison Spittle to learn all about the events of 1066. (11/13) **4.30** The Power of the Bayeux Tapestry. George Parker explores the political history of the artwork. **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Icklewick FM (R) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** NatureBang (R) **8.15** The Media Show (R) **9.0** Loose Ends (R) **9.45** The Cows Are Mad (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: A Working Mother. By Agnes Owens. (4/5) **11.0** Radical **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** You Do Not Have to Say Anything (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.0** News **5.04** Yesterday in Parliament **5.32** Weather **5.34** Shipping Forecast **5.43** Prayer for the Day: **5.45** Farming Today

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am To Serve Them All My Days (1/5) **6.45** The Outside Child (1/5) **7.0** Legal, Decent, Honest and Truthful (3/6) **7.30** The Burkiss Way **8.0** The Train at Platform 4 (4/4) **8.30** Flush (4/5) **8.45** The Offing (5/10) **9.0** Icklewick FM (5/6) **9.30** The Secret History of a School (4/10) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Great Lives (8/9) **10.30** Camel Country **11.0** To Serve Them All My Days (1/5) **11.45** The Outside Child (1/5) **12.0** Legal, Decent, Honest and Truthful (3/6) **12.30** The Burkiss Way **1.0** The Train at Platform 4 (4/4) **1.30** Flush (4/5) **1.45** The Offing (5/10) **2.0** Dilemma (4/6) **2.30** Snap (3/4) **3.0** Mr Betjeman's Class **3.45** Short Works **4.0** Great Lives (8/9) **4.30** Camel Country **5.0** To Serve Them All My Days (1/5) **5.45** The Outside Child (1/5) **6.0** Legal, Decent, Honest and Truthful (3/6) **6.30** The Burkiss Way **7.0** The Train at Platform 4 (4/4) **7.30** Flush (4/5) **7.45** The Offing (5/10) **8.0** Dilemma (4/6) **8.30** Snap (3/4) **9.0** Mr Betjeman's Class **9.45** Short Works **10.0** Comedy Club: Icklewick FM (5/6) **10.30** A Look Back at the Nineties (4/5) **11.0** Hearing With Hegley (1/8) **11.15** Irish Micks and Legends (1/4) **11.30** Rigor Mortis (1/6) **12.0** Great Lives (8/9) **12.30** Camel Country **1.0** To Serve Them All My Days (1/5) **1.45** The Outside Child (1/5) **2.0** Legal, Decent, Honest and Truthful (3/6) **2.30** The Burkiss Way **3.0** The Train at Platform 4 (4/4) **3.30** Flush (4/5) **3.45** The Offing (5/10) **4.0** Dilemma (4/6) **4.30** Snap (3/4) **5.0** Mr Betjeman's Class **5.45** Short Works



Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

A	U	R	I	C	L	E	E	L	P
A	B	L	O	O	D	E	L	L	U
V	O	G	P	R	L	Y	O	T	L
D	E	R	I	O	N	R	T	S	S
C	H	N	T	N	G	E	S	E	E
I	H	S	T	A	G	T	A	I	M
N	Y	E	N	R	O	R	I	D	U
S	T	P	S	Y	I	A	D	S	C
M	U	I	R	T	A	C	D	C	C
R	E	B	M	A	H	C	L	L	E
V	E	N	A	C	A	V	A	E	E

Solution no 17,574

		F		C		M		A		
	P	A	R	T	Y	P	O	O	P	E	R
	O		A		C		O		P		O
T	I	D	Y		L	A	D	Y	L	U	C	K
	N				I		Y		E		K	
A	T	A	L	O	S	S		S	P	I	T	E
	I		A		T		H		I		H	
B	L	A	N	D		T	A	P	E	R	E	D
	L		G		S		N				B	
B	I	C	U	S	P	I	D		T	R	O	Y
	S		A		E		B		A		A	
	M	A	G	I	C	C	A	R	P	E	T	
			E		K		G		E			

Sudoku no 7,438

5	4	1	2	8	3	6	9	7
6	8	9	4	5	7	3	1	2
2	3	7	9	6	1	4	5	8
9	6	5	1	7	8	2	3	4
4	7	8	5	3	2	9	6	1
3	1	2	6	9	4	7	8	5
8	2	6	7	1	9	5	4	3
1	5	4	3	2	6	8	7	9
7	9	3	8	4	5	1	2	6

Word wheel
METALWORK

Suguru

2	3	4	3	1	2
1	5	1	2	4	3
3	2	4	3	5	1
4	1	5	1	2	4
2	3	2	3	5	1
1	4	1	4	2	3

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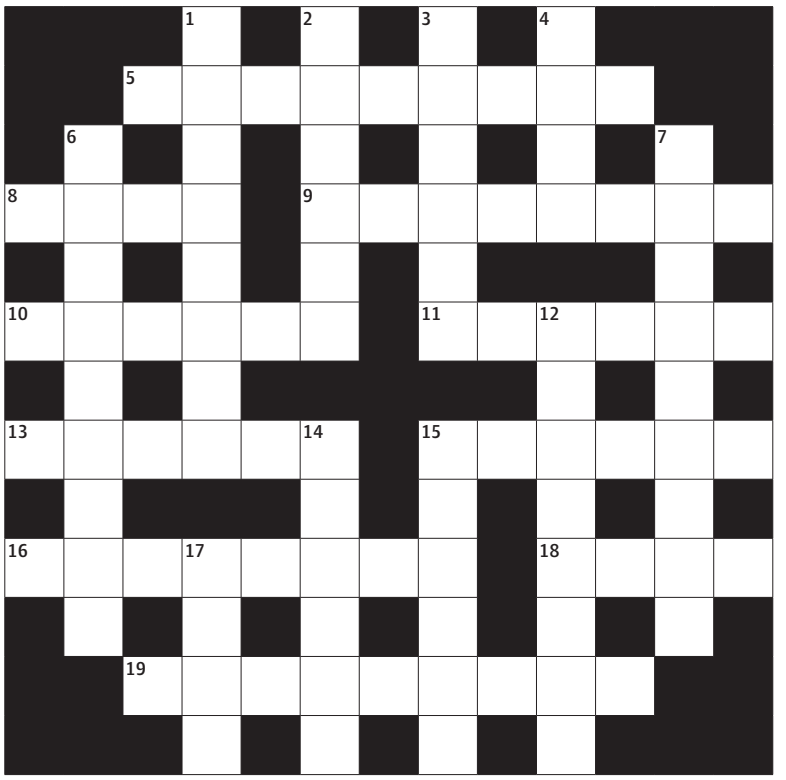
Quick crossword no 17,575

Across

5 Holiday escort (4,5)
8 In the altogether (4)
9 Tub with a prize (5,3)
10 Eerie - like a spy? (6)
11 Polynesian island that inspired Gauguin (6)
13 Small pointed tool - cocktail (6)
15 Belisha __ (6)
16 Wet, boggy ground (8)
18 Timothy, Samuel or Mae (4)
19 Computer storage component - asphalt surface? (4,5)

Down

1 Hawaiian-inspired dish (usually raw fish) - prod it? (4,4)
2 Hat - 1894 du Maurier novel (6)
3 Sweet, melodious (6)
4 Nervous, emotionally intense (4)
6 Offensively self-important - opium bust (anag) (9)
7 Equine present - don't look it in the mouth (4,5)
12 Hot spell (8)
14 What a glutton might have after seconds (6)
15 Dull with sleep - __-eyed (6)
17 Bite - worry (4)



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Sudoku no 7,439

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

6								4
	4			6			2	
		3	4	7	5	9		
		1	9		4	5		
	3	4		5		2	8	
		2	8		7	4		
		8	2	1	3	6		
	7			9			4	
2								3

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

	4				5
				3	
		2			

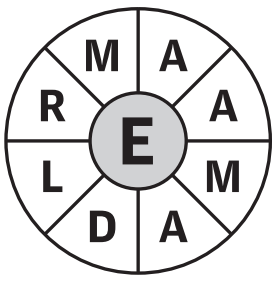
Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words associated with Sweden in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

G	R	E	I	N	D	E	E	R
A	L	A	S	P	P	U	Y	E
E	T	E	D	M	I	H	S	S
G	T	V	A	N	C	E	T	R
H	O	L	I	R	U	O	D	O
C	M	T	A	S	C	L	N	N
O	I	N	L	K	B	A	A	V
A	O	T	H	A	E	Y	L	O
M	B	O	C	K	N	U	P	L
R	L	B	I	R	I	D	A	V
M	S	A	A	B	A	E	L	O

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least three others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. Target: 18. Good: 23. Very good: 28. Excellent: 33.



Trivia corner

How many hearts do octopuses have?
a. One
b. Two
c. Three
d. Four
Answer top right